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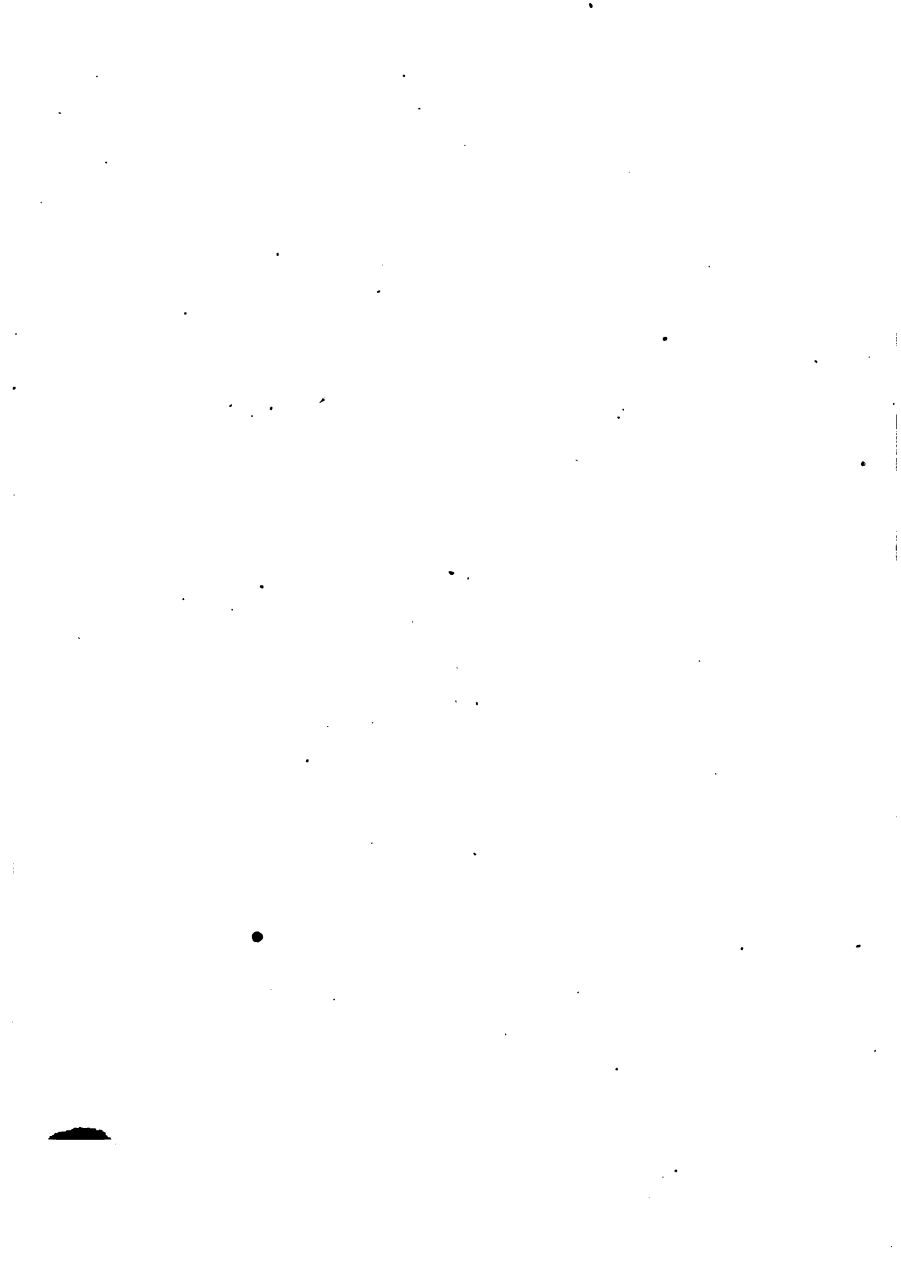




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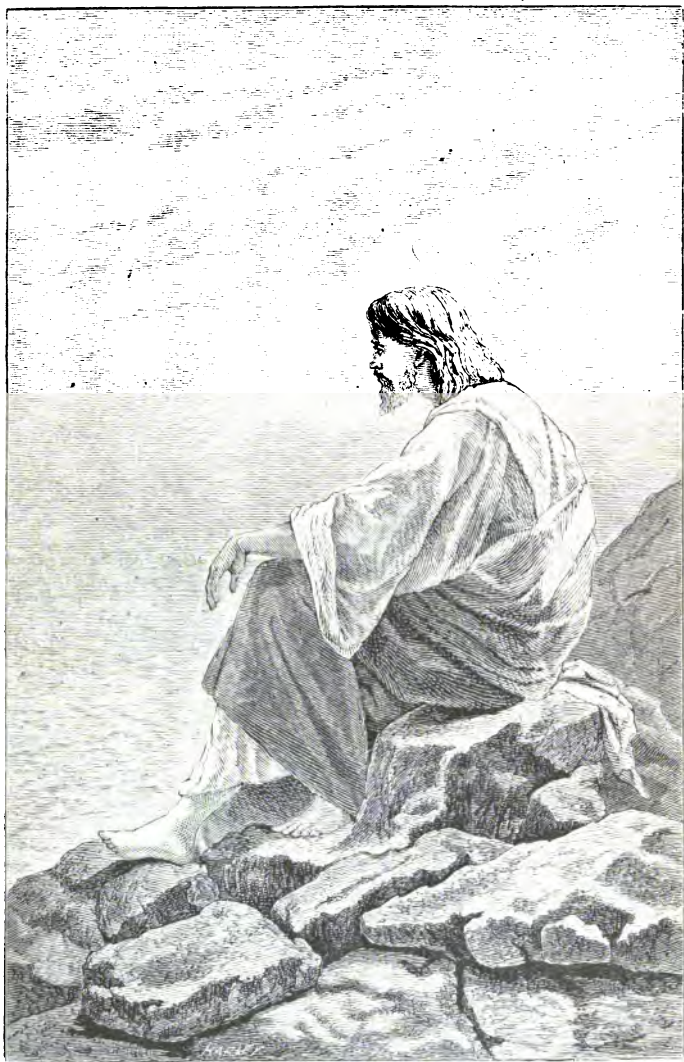
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STORIES

FROM

THE LIPS OF THE TEACHER.

RETOLD BY A DISCIPLE.

Octavius Brooks Fitchingham



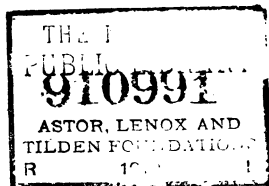
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P R E F A C E .

HOUGH this little volume is offered to children, the writer of it wishes to say a few words to those who are not children, to explain his purpose in offering it. He has long been persuaded that the parables of the New Testament were waiting to be presented in a new form to modern readers, and especially to young readers;—partly because long intimacy with them has impaired their vividness, rubbed off the bloom of their poetic beauty, and even rendered the mind insensible to the delicacy of their truth; partly because the use that has been made of them for doctrinal instruction has weakened very much their value as stories suggesting spiritual thoughts to the imagination, and has even perverted them from their original aim by associating them with theological opinions;

* Mrs. Nellie Smith - 18 Oct. 1918

and more particularly because the more prosaic mind of the West finds a difficulty in supplying the details which are necessary to the completeness of the stories themselves.

The parables were spoken by an Oriental to Orientals, and were understood immediately, even in the brief form in which they were uttered. They were so imbued with the spirit of the people to whom they were addressed, so native to the soil, so fragrant with the aroma of the ground, so bright with the Eastern sunshine, so breezy with the Eastern air, — they were so full of local allusions, they reflected so clearly the manners and customs of the country and the period, that no amplification was necessary. The reciter could leave his auditors to fill up the empty spaces in the little narrative. A few words were sufficient to present a landscape, which we can picture to ourselves only by a diligent study of guide-books; to recall a scene which fancy alone can paint for us, and which fancy can do scarcely more than sketch; to suggest a familiar usage, which we become acquainted with through the medium of the antiquarian; to describe an event, for which

we must refer with much misgiving to the uncertain chronicle or tradition. The short tale of two or three sentences was long and full to those whose fancy could furnish instantly all that the speaker omitted, and could put in the requisite light, shade, and color on the spot. But all this advantage of time, place, knowledge, genius, is lost for us. They who have the information necessary to make the parables speak, commonly lack the fancy, and they who have the fancy, commonly lack the information.

It has been the object of the writer of this little book to supply, so far as he could, these grave but inevitable deficiencies; to make the parables of Jesus suggest to our minds, in some degree, what they suggested to the minds of their first hearers; to put in, if he may say so, the Eastern climate, the sunshine, the atmosphere, the scenery; to revive the associations with places and people, and to connect them with the circumstances that gave them birth. To this end he has allowed himself necessarily a good deal of liberty in his treatment of the material before him. He has woven into the stories descriptions of the coun-

try, sketches of popular habits and observances, details of out-door and in-door life in Judæa; he has drawn on his own fancy for connecting links and incidental details; he has thrown in passages of dialogue and of soliloquy; he has amplified hints; he has endeavored to give here and there something of dramatic movement to the narrative, as one naturally would do were he telling the stories himself to a company of children. In a word, he has attempted to do for the Westerns what the Orientals did for themselves. That he has fully succeeded in this undertaking, he is not presumptuous enough to think. He will meet with all the success he looks for, if he shall render in any degree more attractive these most beautiful and deep apologues of the Master, or shall help any to see more distinctly the form of truth under the garb of beauty; he will meet with more success than he looks for, if he shall accomplish anything towards making the New Testament a more living book to the young people of his day.

O. B. FROTHINGHAM

NEW YORK, October, 1862.

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INTRODUCTION.



NEED not tell you, my dear children, that Jesus, the Great Teacher, was in the habit of telling stories to his friends, and the people who came about him, sometimes in crowds and sometimes in small companies, to hear him talk.

These stories are called Parables, and are written in the New Testament. They are short fables or tales; sometimes true tales of men and women who actually lived, and of events that really happened; sometimes imaginary tales of men and women who might have lived, and events that might have happened. Sometimes they were little histories, and sometimes they were little poems.

Whichever they were, they were meant, not

to amuse the listeners, or to entertain them as parents entertain their children, but to instruct them in the truths of religion and in the rules of good life. The instruction was given in this form because it was more attractive, and more impressive: it would be listened to more attentively, thought of more earnestly, and remembered more distinctly, than if it had been given as the catechism gives it. The Eastern people were very fond of this mode of teaching. The Persian and Arabian writings are full of parables. We find them in the Greek and Roman books. The fables of Æsop are parables from the Greek.

Many very beautiful stories of the same kind are told in the Old Testament. You remember, for example, the lovely little tale of the pet lamb, which the prophet Nathan told to David the king, when he wished to make him feel how wicked he had been in taking away the wife of his friend. The king heard the story, and was touched to the heart by it; but he would have been very angry if the lesson it contained had been preached to him in a sermon.

But of all stories, none are so beautiful as some

of those which Jesus told to his friends ; none have so much meaning in them ; none present to the mind such sweet pictures of scenery and life. They must have been very fresh and vivid to those who heard them ; and if they are not so fresh and vivid to you, it is because you are little Americans, and not little Jews ; because you live in the United States, and not in Palestine ; and because you are alive now, and not when Jesus was, nearly two thousand years ago.

You must remember that the country which Jesus was born in differed from ours in almost everything.

The cities did not look like our cities ; the fields did not look like our fields. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, were not the same that they are here ; for the land was situated on the other side of the globe, and of course had a peculiar climate. This climate had a great deal to do with forming the habits of the people. Men and women wore light, loose clothing, and lived for the most part in the open air.

They had no large halls such as we have, but all their public meetings were held out of doors

in the market-place. There were no newspapers, and no books, and, so far as we know, there were no schools. A few persons who were rich had parts of the Scriptures written on parchment; and in certain places called synagogues, or meeting-houses, learned men used to read and explain the Scriptures to such as chose to come and hear. Very few of the people could read or write, and they would not have been much better off if they could, for there was but one book to read, and that was too rare and costly to own, while in regard to writing, there was not much to write about, for people did not travel as we do, nor trade as we do. It was not often necessary to send a letter from one place to another, because the members of families remained more closely at home.

A class of persons called Scribes did nearly all the writing that was done, and their time was occupied chiefly in copying books of Scripture, or in making law-papers, wills, and contracts. These men would sit in some public place, ready to write a letter, draw up an account, or make out a bill for any one who chose to call on them.

The great doctors, rabbins as they were called, the learned men, the students of the Law of Moses, lived apart by themselves, and wrote long rolls of parchment full of words about the holy books; but of all this the people knew nothing, and cared nothing.

Jesus did not belong, you must understand, to this learned class. He was not a famous doctor; he was not skilled in the Law. He was taught by the Holy Spirit, and had the Word written on his heart. He was one of the people; he lived among the people, and spoke to the people in their own speech, and in a way they could understand. He spoke to them whenever he met them. He had no grand church, no large congregation, such as famous preachers have to-day. He did not speak from a pulpit; he wore no silk robe; he wrote no sermons; he preached on no particular day; he prepared no long discourses, delivered no lectures. Whenever he found a place and a few people, he talked to them in his simple and beautiful way, as a wise friend talks to his friends, or a parent talks to his children. Often he discoursed in the streets

and squares of a city, in a porch, under an awning, at the house and table of a friend; oftener his speeches were made in the country, as he sat in a fishing-boat, or rested beneath a tree, or reclined on a hill-side, or walked from place to place along the highway, or crossed the fields, or lingered on the banks of the river Jordan.

When the caravans came in, with their long strings of camels and troops of slaves, from Egypt, Arabia, or Babylon, and the merchants displayed their goods in the booths, making the narrow streets gay with their silks and gems, and the people thronged the square to hear the news from beyond the desert and the sea, Jesus was there in the crowd, waiting an opportunity to say his word. On the great feast-days, when the multitude flocked to Jerusalem, Jesus was there, standing on the great staircase, or walking on the marble pavement of the temple courts, ready to converse with all he met; or he might be seen in the synagogue, conversing with the doctors and explaining the Scriptures. The largest portion of his time was passed in the country, amid the wild scenes of lake and mountain, among

plain villagers, surrounded by the associations of rural life. His text was usually a phenomenon in the aspect of nature, or a feature in the landscape. It was the sunshine, the rain, the whispering wind, a fig-tree with nothing on it but leaves, a tower begun and left unfinished, the ruins of a house washed away by a mountain torrent, a draught of fishes sorted at the lake shore, a heap of pearls arranged in a bazaar by some wealthy trader from the East.

His sermon was commonly illustrated by one of these beautiful parables, in which the deepest truths of religion were shown in some lovely emblem, or adorned by some striking and picturesque comparison.

If he wanted, for example, to make men feel the goodness of God, he pointed to the sunshine that fell on all fields alike, and to the rain that watered the gardens of the wicked as willingly as the gardens of the good. If he wished to tell them how the heavenly glory was given to little things, he spoke of the lilies which grew all over the valleys, and lived but for a few hours, yet were dressed more gorgeously than

Israel's richest and most magnificent king. Instead of preaching a sermon on Providence, he bade people notice the quiet grass, that simply stood in its place and waited for the light and dew, or the careless birds, that built their nests and fed their young, and spread out their wings on the air, and were cared for by Him who made them as they were, and made them for the world he placed them in. The seed-corn planted in the ground, and mouldering in its little grave, that the shoot and stem and leafy stalk and golden-colored fruit might come up and flourish in the upper air, beautiful and foodful for men and women, was sermon enough for him about the Immortal Life and the Resurrection. Was it necessary to make men believe that they were worth something, and could do something in the world, he stopped by the woman making bread, and called attention to the way in which the little lump of leaven made the immense lump of dough light and good to eat.

He always had a story at hand for his purpose. Sometimes it was a very little story indeed, that could be all told in very few words, and some-

times it was quite a long history, with many incidents and several people in it.

I purpose telling you now some of these stories as well as I can in my own way. I cannot tell them as Jesus told them, in his own most beautiful language; I must use such language as I have,—language which you perhaps will be able to understand better than the Eastern speech that he used. But I shall say nothing which he might not have said,—at any rate, I shall say nothing that he has not put into my mind,—and I hope I shall say nothing that will not help you to understand and enjoy his own pure and simple teaching.

The first story I shall tell you is about listening, about welcoming good words, and changing good words into good actions. It is a very excellent story to begin with, as you will see.



THE SOWER.

IT chanced one day that Jesus was walking through the farming country, with three or four of his friends, who called themselves his disciples, or pupils.

They went with him wherever he went, because they loved him, and liked nothing so well

as to be in his society, and hear him talk, even when they did not understand everything he said to them; which was very often the case, for they were unlearned people, and required to have thoughts made very plain to them.

It was the spring time, the season for planting, and the fields far and near as they went along were dotted with farmers busily throwing the seed by handfuls into the ground.

The Master had been telling his pupils some of his most precious truths about the Kingdom of Heaven, or the good time coming, as we should say, when the beautiful angels should dwell on the earth, and wars should be over, and prisoners should be let out of prison, and slaves should be freed; when the great should help the little, and the wise should teach the foolish, and the high should lift up the low, and the rich should take care of the poor; when the hungry should be fed, and the naked should be clothed, and the sick should be healed, and the sorrowing should be comforted, and the wicked should be made to love God, and all men should live in charity and kindness together like one great

family. He had been talking long and earnestly, till now the conversation had ceased, and the company walked on in silence,—one tired of listening, another thinking over what had been said, another still gazing vacantly about on the scene that lay around them.

The road ran on through the valley, with fields on either side so near that the edge of the way was the border of a farm. To the right a sower was planting his grain. He held the seeds in the gathered folds of his loose garment, and, as he marched from end to end of the field, he took it by the handful and flung it right and left. The ground was uneven, and the soil was not all equally good;—here was a heap of stones, there was a thicket of bushes, only now and then a broad piece of deep, rich earth. But the sower flung his seed right and left, not heeding particularly where it fell, and the seed, as it flew about, sometimes disappeared in the openings between the stones, and sometimes lodged among the leaves and spires of the shrubbery. In this way great quantities were lost, for nothing useful could grow in those places.

"How carelessly that man casts his seed!" said one of the disciples to his neighbor,—"a full half of it is wasted. See there, now, a whole handful has fallen right into the middle of that gravel-bed. There is small chance that that will grow."

"Yes," rejoined his companion. "And did you mark just now what a quantity that thorn-bush caught? Seeds must be cheap, I think."

Just then the man came to the edge of the field near which they were, flinging right and left all the time, and a handful came out into the middle of the road and lay there in full sight. They trod on it as they went by, and one of them, looking back from a distance, saw the birds eagerly picking it up, and making their breakfast on what should have been bread for men and women. "Does the man expect to grow corn on the high road?" said James.

Jesus overheard this little chat about the sower, and presently turning round, he said, "I have a story to tell you."

In a moment they were wide awake, and he began.

"Once there was a Sower, and he went out to

sow ; and as he sowed, some seed fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured it up. Some fell among thorns, and the strong thorns, growing fast, would not leave them room to grow, but choked them before they had time to root themselves in the soil. Some fell on stony ground, where the soil was thin. These sent their roots down at once, but very soon came to the rock and could go no farther ; so they grew the other way, into the air, and were twice as tall above the soil as they were deep beneath it,—twice as tall as they should be for their root. The consequence was, that, when the hot sun came and blazed upon them, they had not moisture enough from the ground to sustain themselves, and soon dried up. The rest of the seed fell into good earth, took root, grew, and brought forth abundant fruit.”

When Jesus had told his little story, the disciples looked at one another, as if they would say, “Why, this is what we have just seen,—this is what we have been talking about. What does the Master mean by telling us this?”

And Peter, who was always the first to speak,

and the readiest to ask questions,—a very good trait in old children as well as in young ones,—said: “Master, we saw that sower a few minutes ago.”

“Well,” replied the Master, “and did you see what you saw? I mean, did you understand it?”

“O yes! What was there hard to understand? It was a common thing enough,—a farmer scattering his grain. Do you see anything wonderful in that?”

“Why no,—and yet I think I saw more marvels in it than you did. For, as I looked at the man, I thought how much he is like me! I go up and down the country, from town to town, from house to house, scattering my seeds of thought as he scatters his seeds of grain. I scatter them everywhere, by the handful, by the heartful, and, alas! how many of them are lost, just as those were!”

“Then by the sower you mean yourself?”

“Yes.”

“And what, then, is the field?”

“The field is the world of men and women, who have ears to hear, and minds to think, and hearts to feel.”

"But who are the rocks? And who are the thorns? And who stand for the roadside? And who can you mean by the birds?" exclaimed, one after another, the now curious listeners.

Jesus smiled, and said, "Is it possible that you do not see it yet? Surely, Peter, you have not forgotten what happened only a few days ago, when I was asking what people said about me. You were very quick with your word, and cried out, 'I think you are the Christ!' How eager you were! how your eyes kindled! how your cheeks shone! But a few minutes afterward, on hearing me say that it would be necessary for me to suffer pain and insult, and perhaps death, you were very much shocked and angered. You would not hear of such a thing. I was obliged to rebuke you for your impatience and unbelief. Your faith in me had so little root that it dried up in an instant. Was not that something like the seed that was sown on the rock?"

Peter hung his head, and owned that it was. Then John felt a little prick in his conscience, and cried out, "You need not tell me who the thorn-bush is. That I am sure is I, with my hot temper,

which cannot bear reproof. I remember, to my mortification, the Samaritans on whose heads I wanted to call down fire because they would not hear what you had to say to them, and drove you out of their village."

"And who is the roadside, James?" said the Master.

James was silent, for he knew that his heart sometimes lacked sensibility,—that he was as much too cold as the others were too hot, and that very often the kind, fruitful words of his great Friend had lain on the surface of his mind, without being thought of or reflected on, or allowed to sink in, till the wind blew them away, or other wandering thoughts snapped them up, or the cares of business trod them down beneath their hurrying feet. So they were silent and absent-minded, and each disciple opened the door into the garden of his own heart, and went in, for the first time in many days, and began throwing out the stones, and pulling up the weeds, and rooting out the thorn-bushes, so that the next seeds the Teacher planted should be sure to fall into good ground.

They were sad and discouraged, as children are when some little fault is found in them which they can easily correct. They had no heart to ask Jesus who were the good ground; it seemed to them that there was no good ground in their gardens, and yet all the time the knowledge they had of themselves was like a sun, and the tears they shed were like softening showers, helping to prepare the ground to receive good words and change them into good actions.

The great Sower of Truth has flung his seeds all over the world. There is no place where they have not fallen. Good men and women plant them in the minds of other men and women. Preachers take them into churches, and scatter them among the people who sit in the pews, hoping that some of them will take root in good ground. The Sunday-school teacher carefully gathers them up, and brings them into the Sunday-school to scatter among the children. Sunday after Sunday he comes with his mind full of the best thoughts he can find. He collects around him as many little people as he can, and liberally gives them the best he has,—the seed

that comes to the best harvest. But he feels that a great deal of his labor is thrown away. Off in that corner of the room sits a little fellow who will not be interested in what he says. He listens stupidly, as if he was half asleep; no impression is made on his heart. He goes away, and in a few minutes it is all gone,—something he is interested in blows it all away. That little fellow is the wayside.

On this bench sits a little girl, who listens with both her ears, and with her eyes as well. She does not lose sight of the teacher for a single minute, she does not mean to lose one word. "O how beautiful that is!" she says to herself; "how much I am interested in that! How good our teacher is to tell us such lovely things! I shall go away at once and do just as he says. I mean to be a good girl from this moment! No more disobedience, no more anger, no more impatience, no more idleness, no more trifling with dolls and picture-books." She runs up to the teacher, and thanks him for his sweet lesson,—but the next day it is not so sweet. There are so many things to do; the lessons are so hard,

the school-mistress is so cross, the children tease and vex one so; it is so much easier and pleasanter to have a good time than to be a good girl,—that by Monday night her brave resolutions are dried up, and her bright feelings, having no root in her heart, are withered away. She was a piece of stony ground.

Here again, in this class, two very pretty children are hiding their faces behind their books, and talking with all their might about bonnets and ribbons and gloves, and the charming party they had the week before, and how Miss So-and-so was dressed, and what they meant to wear at the next dance. Pretty little girls, with bright hair and smiling eyes. But they are thorn-bushes, and the teacher sighs as he looks at them, for he knows that no good seed can take root in such light minds. When vanity grows so fast, virtue can hardly put forth a leaf.



THE TARES.

THE scene is still by the beautiful shores of the Sea of Galilee, in the loveliest region of all the chosen land. The sweet waters, limpid and calm, not deep, lay embosomed in green hills high enough to be called mountains; an opening in them on two sides lets

in and out the river Jordan, whose swift waters leave their track across the lake, and cause the only motion that ever disturbs its surface; save when, through some gorge or deep ravine, the wind comes down, and beats into foam the ripples that play over the sparkling expanse. On the shores of this inland sea, rich cities, full of people, Tiberias, Bethsaida, Capernaum, now gone forever, stood, flourished, and decayed.

The climate in its neighborhood was delicious; it was the climate of the tropics. The earliest melons ripened there. The gentler slopes of the hill-sides were covered with wheat-fields, the steeper declivities were clothed with soft verdure and luxuriant shrubbery; in the more rocky portions flourished the vine, purple with grapes. On its waves floated the waterfowls; on its banks warbled the birds. The fishermen dotted it over with their boats, and made it musical with the splashing of their nets. In the midst of bright gardens and villas it flashed like a gem. The planting season is over, and the summer weeks have brought the seed well along towards its maturity. On every side the eye rests on culti-

vated fields rich with the promise of the coming harvest. There is a lesson in every blade of grass, in every leaf on the trees, in every stone and weed,—a lesson of Providence which Jesus reads to himself and reads aloud to his friends.

They have been talking, I suppose, as they were accustomed to do while they walked, about the heavenly kingdom,—when it should come, and how, and who should have a place in it, and whether such and such people, whom they thought of, should come in. Of course only the good people would come in; but what, then, would be done with the bad people? Why were the bad people permitted to live? Why were they not taken out of the world at once? Why did God allow any to be in the world to forget him, and deny him, and sin against him? Why did he not remove all those who did not believe in his Christ, so that there might be none but faithful servants left, and the good time might come immediately? These were hard questions to answer, and Jesus did not reason with his friends about them. But he told them this little story

of the Tares and the Wheat, thinking that they might find in it all the answer they needed.

Once there was a farmer who had large fields, and took great pains in the cultivation of them, sparing no labor or money to obtain from his land, not only the largest, but the finest crops of wheat. His ground was faithfully ploughed and carefully weeded; the rocks were dug out, the barren spots filled in with earth, the brambles and briers all pulled up by the roots. The seed he planted was the best, and it was put in at the best moment, in the best way. Having done all he could to insure a full and happy result, he waited for the weather, prayed for fair days, and expected a full harvest to reward him for his care and toil.

The season was pretty well advanced, and all seemed to be going on prosperously, when one day his foreman, or chief laborer, came to him, and said, "Do you know, sir, that one of your fields of wheat, the richest and handsomest you have, is full of weeds? I did not see them at first, for when they were coming up they looked so much like the wheat that no one could tell

them apart. But now they are grown so tall that there can be no mistake about it. They are rank, and they look badly. How could they have come there? The field was carefully tilled, for I attended to it myself."

"It is no fault of yours or mine," replied the farmer; "the best care will not always keep them out. The seeds may be left in the soil; or the wind may blow them from some neighboring farm; or it may be that somebody who bears me ill-will has been trying to injure me by scattering the seed among my grain in the night, when no one was looking."

"What shall I do about it?" asked the foreman. "Would it not be best to go into the field with the men and pluck them up before they grow larger and choke the wheat?"

"By no means," said the master; "do no such thing; the danger will be, in doing that, that you will destroy the wheat as well as the weeds; for if you try to cut down the tares, you can hardly help cutting down the wholesome stalks which are growing close beside them; and if you pull them up, you will loosen the ground, and

disturb the roots of the thriving plant. No, no. We must let them remain as they are,—the whole must grow together. At the harvest-time the field will be reaped, and then it will be easy enough to separate the weeds, tie them up in bundles, and burn them.”

The summer weeks passed on. The sun poured its heat into the ground; the rain fell, the dew moistened the earth at night, the winds cooled the surface of the soil with their breath; the stalks grew tall, the leaves lay out broadly to the light and air, the fruit swelled in the tiny pods, and took on their golden color in the sunshine,—while from week to week the sapless weeds became thinner and thinner, dryer and more colorless. The blossom of the grain changed into fruit, the blossom of the weeds changed into dead leaves. The wheat waved its tassels in the morning, and rejoiced in the noon. The weed hid its diminishing head from the eye of day, and seemed to shrink from observation. Then came the reapers with their sharp sickles. Weeds and grain fell together in long lines. The wide barn-doors opened to let in the harvest of grain; and

the sky was blackened by the smoke that rose from the heaps of burning stubble.

Jesus ended his story, and the disciples sat for a time silent, not knowing what to say. If they had wondered what the Master meant by the story of the Sower, they wondered still more at this story. The Master saw that they were puzzled, and said presently, "Is it possible that you do not understand me? The field, you remember, as I told you before, is the world of men and women. The Planter is the Son of Man. The wheat stands for those who love and obey him,—the good people who are his friends. The weeds are —"

"O, I know now," cried one of the company; "the weeds are the bad people we have been talking about, those who do not believe you nor love you."

"Yes," replied the Teacher, "and the harvest is the end of the world,—the end of the growing-time, when the characters of men and women are ripe and full, and show themselves for just what they are; when the good heart proves itself by the good life, and the bad heart proves itself by the

bad life; when the young children have become men and women, and the men and women have reached the period when they cannot go back to change or improve themselves any more, but must either stand still or move forward in the way they have been going,—the wicked in the way of wickedness, to be more wicked still, and the good in the way of goodness, to be still better. Then the angels of God, who reap the fields of human life, will come with the sharp sickles of judgment. The fields of existence will be clear of men and women, and each will go where he belongs,—the wicked to their consuming sorrow, the good to their celestial happiness.”

Thus the disciples of Jesus were made to see that in this world the good and the bad must live, and stand side by side and work together; must share the same light, and be clouded by the same shadow; must catch the same dew-drops, and be fanned by the same breezes, and draw strength from the same fruitful, nourishing earth, till the moment comes for God to separate them and do with them as he pleases.

And do you, my children, understand this?

I remember that, when I was a little boy, I used to wonder why so many bad boys and girls were born, and why, when they were born, they were not taken away, so that they might not tease and plague and spoil the good ones. It would be so much easier to be good if all were good! It would be so very easy always to do right, always to be kind, always to be dutiful and obedient, if nobody tempted one or provoked one to be otherwise! I am very much afraid that I thought myself one of the good ones, and counted among the bad ones those that I did not like. If I had stopped a moment to consider, I should have reflected that there were some of my companions who disliked me, and thought me bad, and wondered why I was allowed to live in the world. One little girl would think that another little girl was a weed, because she had not a pretty face, or a graceful figure, or a small foot; because she was poor and wore patched clothes; or because she was a better scholar, always knew her lessons, and kept the head of the class, and got all the prizes for good behavior.

Some little boy might wish to get rid of his

playmate because he was a greater favorite with the school than himself; because he ran faster, had more marbles, flew a finer kite, was more generous and kind, and winning in his ways. The idle might be very glad to have the industrious taken out of the way; the ugly would not be sorry if the handsome were removed. Each, perhaps, would look like a weed in the eyes of some; and so the result at last would be, that the whole field must be ploughed over, and every plant pulled up. One would lay hands on this, another on that, till nothing remained to grow.

Good and bad look very much alike when they are young, and it is impossible to say what they will be when they grow up. Some who seem to be very good when they are small may not be so good when they are larger, for passions are in them which we do not see, and these passions may take a start by and by, and spread so fast that the whole heart will be overgrown by them. And some who seem to be very bad when they are small may not be so bad when they are larger, for passions are in them, too, which we do not see, and these passions for truth and goodness

may take a start presently, and cover the whole field of life with beautiful flowers. What you take to be a weed may turn out, after all, to be wholesome wheat. Let me see; here is a great bundle of affections taken out of all your little hearts. Some of them, it seems to me, ought to be picked out and thrown away.

Where shall we begin? Come, you mischievous thing called Pride, there can be no doubt about you,—everybody agrees that you are a weed, and a most hurtful one; you shall go at any rate. But stop a moment. If I take you away, what will become of the little maiden's virtue? How will she keep herself clean and sweet? How shall she stand up against temptation when her self-respect is gone, when she has lost her sense of shame and her feeling of honor? No, no. Pride, you must stay for the present, till we see what is to come from you; perhaps you are a weed, but who can be sure of that? Some people have been saved by their pride, and certainly they were not saved by weeds.

Let it stay, and we will take something else. Here it is,—Vanity; love of dress and show and

praise: here, you gay weed, your time is come, for you will take all the little maid's thoughts from serious things, and fix them on herself and her personal appearance, till she is as silly as a peacock; she will be a great deal better off without you. Will she, though? Are we quite sure of that? Will it be a good thing for her not to care how she looks, not to care what impression she makes on people, not to care what her companions think of her? Will it be well for her to be indifferent whether she pleases or not? What then is to prevent her from being sluttish and slovenly? Suppose she falls into untidy habits, may not this tiny little plant be an herb of grace to her? Certainly it may: it may ruin her, but then it may rescue her; it may lead her into extravagance and vice, but then it may keep her out of dirty places and dirty company. Yes; Vanity shall stay, but it shall be carefully watched.

What weed shall we take next? I see one, a tall strong one,—Ambition; the love of being first, the passion for power and fame and distinction, the desire to have one's own person

and name eminent above all others. O, what a bad thing that is! What multitudes of people it has destroyed! Some of the noblest and most beautiful in the world have fallen victims to it. Out with it at once; it shall not stay in this dear child's heart another minute. Nay, not so quick, good friend, says the heart's master. For there was once a little boy who had none of this vice, as you call it, no desire to excel, no wish to be first at work or play; he would as lief be at the bottom of his class as at the top; he had no choice between being a wise man and being a dunce, and a dunce he became. As he grew up, he was always last, lagging behind all other people in whatever he undertook; he had not ambition enough to improve his condition in any way, and he fell into utter contempt. Now is it not possible that, by taking away this passion for fame, our little fellow here may come to an end like that? Beware; you may repent one day. It may be a precious virtue you are destroying. Very well; so be it. Ambition shall be left, too. Some of it must be good, how much of it the future must determine.

But who has a word to say in favor of the weed I have in my hand now? Who can declare a quick temper to be anything but a vice? See its eyes flash, see its hand clench, hear its fiery words. There is quarrel and battle and death in it. The world would be very peaceful if there were none of this in it. Yes; so it would, but it would be very tame and stupid. This is the stuff that high spirits are made of; this helps men to be chivalrous and heroic, and, when it is mellowed by age and experience, it carries people through great enterprises, and gives them a courage that overcomes every difficulty, and thinks no more of dying than of going to sleep. It is a dangerous thing to have, but it has its good side. God planted it; let it grow, but watch it, lest it grow too fast, and put a check upon it, lest it run away with its possessor.

But come; we must pull out something: there are bad things in the world, there are weeds. Here, for instance, is one, a very ugly one, too. It is love of money, stinginess. Pah! what a disgusting thing that is! Everybody hates it; nobody was ever the better, or anything but very

much the worse, for it. It will not let us give to the poor; it forbids our feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked, or sending good things to the sick and wounded in hospitals. When we think we will buy a gift for a friend, this comes in, and says, Do not do it, it will cost too much. When we purpose making our wives and children happy, it cries, You cannot afford it. If nothing else is a weed, this is, and if only one is to be pulled up, we shall be safe in pulling up this one.

Shall we? Is it certain that we shall? Is there not such a thing as loving money and valuing money too little? Is there not such a thing as wasting money on things we do not want, and things that do nobody any good and make nobody happy? And may not this ugly stinginess, as you call it, do good service now and then in making us careful, prudent, frugal? Well, well, perhaps it may. It may be good for something after all. The chances are that it is a weed, and will turn out to be one; still there is a chance that it is not, and for the sake of that one chance we will let it grow with the rest.

So you see, my dear children, in this whole heart full of growing plants I do not find one which I can venture to pull out and throw away. You must think charitably and tenderly of each other as long as you can. Since God only knows what is in you, and he lets good and bad grow together, you, who do not know, must not judge harshly nor impatiently.

Judas thought he loved the poor, and all the money he got he put into a bag that he carried about with him, to give to the poor. He praised himself, and others praised him, for doing so: it looked kind and pitiful. But after a time Judas loved the money more than he loved the poor. Then he thought more of putting money into his bag than of taking it out. By and by he never took it out, but put in all he could come by. This led to his coming by it in bad ways, until at last he actually sold his best friend for thirty pieces of silver. In this case, what looked like a stalk of wheat proved to be a weed of enormous size.

John came to his Master one day, and asked a favor. "What is it," said his Master, "that you

desire?" "My prayer is," said the young man, "that when you come in your power and glory, with your officers and guards and armies, to set up your throne on the ruins of the world's empires, you will let me sit at your right hand in the seat of honor."

It was a very vain and selfish request, was it not? They who heard the young man make it were angry with him for his bold pride. But when the youth afterwards saw his Master mount a cross, instead of a throne, and die like a criminal, instead of reigning like a king,—when he saw that the place at his right hand was a place of agony and shame,—still he desired it: the same love for his friend which made him eager to share his glory, made him eager to share his sorrow; the same ambition which led him to aspire to be his Lord's chief officer, led him to aspire to be his Lord's chief servant and martyr; the same passion for distinction which moved him to become great by the side of Jesus, moved him to become good like Jesus. In this case, what looked like a weed of enormous size and poisonous nature proved to be a stalk of most precious wheat.

It is not for us to say, my children. We must wait. The good and the evil will show themselves at last in their true shape, just as they are, and will come to their own appointed end in the great day of account. Until that day comes, they must live and grow together. It is better that they should, since God wills it so, who wishes what is best for all, for evil and for good alike. It is better for the evil, because if God were to take away the good, and leave the evil alone by themselves, they would grow worse and worse, until they became wholly wicked, and perished miserably by their sin. And it is better for the good, because, if God were to take away the evil, and leave the good alone by themselves, they would have no use for their goodness, — there would be nothing to exercise it on, nothing to do with it; and so, instead of increasing, it might diminish, and after a while disappear altogether. God, perhaps, allows bad men and women to live, in order that good men and women may make them better, and may make themselves better at the same time.

If there were no hard people to soften, no weak

ones to strengthen, no cruel ones to overcome with kindness, and no fierce ones to tame by gentleness,—if there were no wanderers to bring home, no fallen to lift up, no vile to pity, and no guilty to forgive,—what would become of our virtue? If you never task your powers, you lose them; if you never turn your knowledge to account, it vanishes away; and if you do nothing with your justice and truth and love, these too perish, and are gone forever. Our duty is to watch and pray and work. What is growing in our hearts may be weeds, and may be grain. What we take for grain may be weeds, and what we take for weeds may be grain. Time only will show; but as soon as time does show the tall weeds coming up and choking the grain, we must see them, as the quick-eyed farmer saw them in his field, and must be as sure as he was that the fire would burn them at last. We will be wheat-sheaves if we can be, and we will have nothing but wheat-sheaves in the fields of our hearts.

When Jesus ceased speaking to his friends, the shades of evening were falling. The disciples went home to their sleep, half expecting to be

wakened in the morning by the voices of the mighty angels, coming to reap the fields of the world with their flaming swords. The dreadful thought filled their dreams with mingled hope and terror. But the night passed tranquilly as usual, the purple dawn broke over the hill-tops with its calm ocean of light. The gates of the morning swung open as graciously as ever, and the Lord of the harvest was pleased to grant another day in which his children might grow in beauty, and in love to God and man.



THE MUSTARD-SEED.

THE next day was hot, with the terrible heat of the Eastern land. The sun in a cloudless sky blazed down on the white road, and long before noon Jesus and his friends were glad to seek such shelter as they could find. They gathered together with-

in the little patch of shade made by the leaves of a small tree, and looked down on the gleaming lake, whose surface was dotted here and there by a fishing-boat. The hour was quiet, and suggested quiet thoughts.

“How wonderful it is,” said one, at last breaking the silence, “that this tree which covers us all so pleasantly should have grown up from so small a seed! Think of it, the seed was so small, that, when men wish to say a thing is very small indeed, they say it is small as a mustard-seed; but now the wind makes pleasant music in its leaves, and the birds sing and make their nests in its branches, and the ground all about it is guarded from the rays of the midsummer sun, and here we are sitting at its foot,—sitting under a mustard-seed,—four men under a mustard-seed!”

Jesus had been sitting wrapt in thought. But the little speech of his friend seemed to rouse him! He lifted his eyes and said, “Yes, it is very wonderful, and just so it is with the kingdom of heaven I have so often spoken about. That too is a tree from a mustard-seed. That

is like a grain of mustard-seed planted in the ground. Into the heart of a poor carpenter's son it pleased God to plant one of his own great thoughts. The soil of the youth's heart was rich, and quick the seed took root there and grew. The thought spread more and more, till it filled the young man's whole mind and drank up all his affections. He watched it and cultivated it; he watered it with his tears; he let the sun of God's goodness fall on it; he gave it room to grow, and let it by degrees absorb all his best feelings and desires and hopes; he lived only that that seed might increase; all his care was to keep it from harm; day and night he prayed that no bough might be broken, that no leaf of it might wither.

"After some years the thought so possessed him that he was it, he himself was a living thought, he himself was a seed planted in the world. Soon this seed begins to grow in the world. Now it puts out a twig, then a slender branch; friend after friend comes to him, is attached to him, stays with him, makes a part of him, lives on his life. He is now a tree, and has twelve branches, which

he calls by name. One is Peter, another is John, a third is James ; others are called Matthew, &c. The tree is not very large as yet, nor does it cast a broad shadow. Occasionally a way-worn traveller finds rest beneath it ; a poor fainting woman blesses God for its shelter ; the little children love to sport about it ; it is cheering to the poor and friendless. But it shall grow larger ; its branches shall multiply, and extend, and thicken. Great people, strong people, wise people, shall attach themselves to this small body. The wealth of the rich shall belong to it ; it shall absorb the great powers of the earth : in time its branches shall cover the whole land from the mountains to the sea, and all the twelve tribes of Israel shall repose under its shade. The wind in its top shall be the breath of the Holy Spirit : for the singing of birds there shall be mighty organ music and the psalms of ten thousand worshipping souls : the fragrance of its blossom shall rise like incense to heaven, and its precious fruits of faith, hope, and love shall refresh and feed the nations. The seeds shall multiply and be scattered abroad far and wide. Every man and woman shall be a seed ; they shall

be carried by the wind in ships to the distant lands beyond the setting sun ; they shall go in the long caravans across the desert. Wherever they go they shall dwell, and wherever they dwell they shall root themselves and grow. Churches shall spring up, institutions shall be reared, influence shall spread. Every word shall be a seed ; every action shall be a seed ; every thought and feeling shall be a seed ; till, in the end, the germ which was laid in the heart of the young carpenter of Nazareth shall throw its tent over mankind like the all-covering heavens, and give cool rest to the fainting travellers in their life journey."

"But, Master," said one of the company, as the voice of Jesus was hushed, "shall not the kingdom you have so often spoken of come soon ? Shall it not come suddenly ? Shall it not come with a loud clangor of trumpets and a fierce onset of arms ? We have been expecting day by day that you would raise your banner and summon all the faithful to your side, and with terrible outburst of power sweep the princes of men from the face of the earth, utterly destroying their kingdoms by the armies of the Lord. Are you not the Mes-

siah? And is not the Messiah's rule nigh at hand?"

"O yes," replies the Master; "the kingdom is even now among you. Where two or three faithful souls are, there is the kingdom; where I am, there is the kingdom. But see, yonder, that field of corn,—it takes a summer to ripen it. The farmer opens the ground, tills it, manures it, and puts in the seed-corn; he watches it night and day; all the elements work upon it; the sun gives its heat, the clouds give it their moisture. There are wet days and dry days, all alike good; heaven and earth do their best to bring the grain to its perfection; but how slowly the process is carried on. First there appears a little green shoot above the surface of the ground; then a tender stem is lifted up: the stem increases in height and thickness; the broad leaves unfold themselves one by one, making a covering for the ear. On the ear the kernels swell with juice; a few weeks yet mature them; and at length the rich corn is ready to be gathered.

"As it is with the corn, so shall it be with the kingdom of heaven. It comes in by degrees,

and by steps so gradual that you cannot trace them. It is first a right or kind feeling, then a good thought, then a noble action. The first feeling kindles other feelings, till the heart is all ablaze; the thought awakens other thoughts, till the mind is too full to hold; the action sets other actions in motion, till they make life one great noble action. The feelings of many make the power of heart and conscience by which the evils and sins of the world are driven away; the thoughts of many make the great beliefs, the mighty public opinion, by which old ignorances and errors are blown to the winds; the actions of many make the customs and institutions under which nations live. But it takes a great while to change a feeling into a thought, a thought into a belief, a belief into a purpose, and a purpose into a character.

“If it takes a summer to make a good fig, or grape, or olive, how many summers will it take to make a good man or woman brave, and just, and true, and patient, and loving? A great many, surely. And if it takes so many to make one good man or woman, how many will be needed to make a city full?

"No, my children, you will not be wise to look for the kingdom to-morrow or next day, even in your own little heart. You must wait for it, and pray for it, and work for it. I shall go away, and you will go away, and still it will be far off from almost all mankind. But it will come; there is time enough."

At these words the Disciples looked sad, for they had been watching for the kingdom as men watch for the coming of the dawn, and their hope was disappointed.

Jesus saw their sadness, and said: "You are in the kingdom now, because you try to be good, and the kingdom is in you, because good hearts are in you. Take the words I speak to you into your minds; keep your hearts clean, that they may root themselves and grow there; love what is lovely, honor what is honorable, do your duty as well as you can, — that will be enough for you, God will do the rest. He will send the sunshine and the rain, and the gracious seasons; he will conduct the process of growth; he will provide for the great future. Look to it that the kingdom is begun in your heart; he will see that

it is finished in the world. The more faithfully you cultivate your own garden, the quicker the whole earth will become a garden of the Lord."

While they talked, the sun had sped fast towards the west, the shadows lengthened, and in the long Eastern twilight they resumed their journey.



THE SUPPER.

ONE of the rich men of Jerusalem gave a grand dinner-party, and Jesus, who was now a famous person, whom the people were all wondering at and talking about, received an invitation to it. He accepted it, and went at the hour to the Pharisee's house with the other guests.

It was the Sabbath day,—a strange day, some will think, for a dinner party, especially in Jerusalem. For, according to the ancient law, it was a crime to work, or to make others work, on the day of rest. All must give themselves up to repose: the horses must stand still in the stable; no long walks were allowed; the camels must lie down in the stall; the servants must be released from domestic duties; no fire could be kindled; no wood could be gathered; no food could be cooked. The good people who did what Moses commanded prepared their dinner the day before, just as our New-England forefathers did. It was even written in the law-books, that if a man picked up a few sticks on the holy day, he should be stoned to death.

So great was this regard for the Sabbath day, that the Jews would not fight on the Sabbath, so that, as the historian tells us, when the city of Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, the enemy, hearing that the Jews would not defend themselves on the day of rest, took advantage of that scruple and made the fierce assault by which the city was captured. There is a story that a Jewish pilot in

a storm refused to steer the vessel, and suffered shipwreck, because it was the Sabbath. It is not likely, however, that many Jewish sailors would choose to drown a hundred or so of their fellow-men, and themselves besides, rather than move a rudder on the Sabbath day; nor were all the soldiers in Jerusalem so pious that they would let their enemies come in and pillage their beautiful city, and destroy their rich temple, because fighting was work, and it was not lawful to work on the day of rest.

These old laws about eating and drinking, and working and travelling, were still in force among the Jews when Jesus was alive, but more, it is likely, with the common people than with the rich and fashionable. Besides, the rich usually do very much as they please. If a poor man worked on Sunday, that was another thing; that was against the law; he must be punished; but who would venture to punish the rich? This very man who sent the invitation to Jesus thought it a dreadful thing, no doubt, when Jesus some time after this cured people of their diseases on the Sabbath day, or went into a corn-field and pulled

some corn and ate it, to satisfy his hunger. That was breaking the law; that showed that he had no piety, and was not a good man. These stern old commandments were very convenient when the great wished to get rid of some one whom they did not like.

But we must come back to the dinner. It was very elegant and costly. The tables were long; the couches were wide and soft. The guests came in their best clothes, and were met at the door by servants, who washed their feet with perfumed water, presented them with bouquets of flowers, or placed garlands on their heads, then ushered them into the banqueting-room.

Heavy curtains of rich stuffs shaded the opening from the rays of the sun, and maidens with long feathery fans cooled the air, and kept away everything which could annoy the feasters. At the end of the room a band of musicians played soothing melodies of the East, and burning sandal-wood and myrrh filled the atmosphere with heavy, luxurious odors.

As the guests seated themselves at the table, the host went up and down the room, taking care

that each had the seat allotted to him, and that the due order of rank and distinction was preserved. One man, who was conceited and full of a sense of his own importance, took a higher place than belonged to him; he had to move lower down, and make room for one of more eminence. Another, as modest as his neighbor was vain, was asked to come up to a more honorable place, near the head of the table, where the master of the feast himself presided. One man had not on fashionable garments, and was not allowed to sit down at all. At length all were seated, and the servants brought in the dishes. The guests chatted together very much as people at dinner do in our days; talked about the fish and the mutton, praised the wine, and complimented the host on his hospitality.

But Jesus said to some of his friends who sat near him, "Why do men give such magnificent dinners to those who do not need them? Every one here is rich, lives well, can afford to return the invitation, and give such a dinner as this to as many as there are here. None of them ever knew what it was to be hungry. It seems to

me, if I gave a dinner, I would give it to the starving, not to the full; to those who had none, not to those who could give me as rich as I gave them. I would give it to the poor. How much better that would be than this! What multitudes there are in Jerusalem who could be made contented a whole day, and grateful for several days, by a small portion of all that is here just tasted and thrown away by these people, who eat not because they want food, but because they must compliment their host, and who eat no more than they are obliged to by courtesy, and as a matter of politeness.

“Once upon a time a great friend of mine made a dinner party, and asked a great many people,—many hundreds more than there are here. All his rich neighbors and acquaintances far and wide had invitations. The day came; the weather was fine; the fatted calf and sheep were killed and cooked; the tables were covered with choice dishes; the host dressed himself to be ready for his company, but the company did not come, only the servants came at the last minute to bring their masters’ excuses. One said, ‘I have just

been married, and am about starting on my wedding journey to the mountains; of course I cannot come.' Another said, 'I am, unfortunately, engaged this afternoon to go out of town and look at a piece of land which is offered for sale, and which I strongly think of buying. I am very sorry; but I shall lose my bargain if I eat your dinner. Excuse me, then, from eating your dinner.' A third sent word that he had been stocking one of his farms with some fine cattle,—choice breeds from the Northern country,—and he must seize the opportunity of a pleasant day to go out and look at them.

"So it went on. This one had a bad cold; that one a severe headache; the other was indisposed; till, out of the whole company invited, scarcely half a dozen made their appearance. It was very provoking: there was the feast, and nobody to eat it. On this, the master of the house bethought him of his poor relations, whom he had not shown civility to for a great while, and bade his servants go out at once with cards of invitation to them. They came promptly enough, with the exception of one or two, who said they were not going to

take up with second-hand invitations; if their names were not on the first list, they should not be on the second.

“But the seats were not full yet, for the tables were exceedingly large. So some common acquaintance were called in. When these did not occupy all the room, the master exclaims: ‘Well; let us have the poor; let us have the hungry and the miserable; let us give a good dinner to the people who live at the Five Points.’

“When it came to that, the seats were soon filled up. The guests came in crowds, with great hungry eyes, and mouths that had not tasted good meat for many a day. They came in all sorts of clothes, but with one sort of appetite. It was as much as the servants could do to help them. Some had to sit on the grass in the garden, and eat their dinner there. But all had enough, and went home satisfied. And as for the host, he said he enjoyed it a great deal more than he would have enjoyed his fine friends; and there was this good thing about it, he should not be expected to eat ever so many dinners in return. To have made so many poor men and women happy was

far better, he said, than to have made a few rich people merry for an hour."

Then said one of the company, "Pray be good enough to tell us who was this friend of yours? He must have had an immense house, and a heart bigger than his house, and a purse as large as his heart. Who was he?"

And Jesus made reply: "It was the Lord, the Great Giver. Every day he opens the wide windows of the dawn, and lets the air from the heavens blow through the spacious chambers of the earth: he pushes back the golden gates, and bids his messenger, the light, go in, and welcome all his creatures to the banqueting-hall, whose floor, carpeted with green, is as broad as the surface of the globe; whose azure ceiling is as high as the dome of the all-covering skies. He spreads his large table east, west, north, and south; heaps upon it the produce of the ground, the fruits of the trees, the treasures of the deep sea, the costly essences, the luscious fig, pomegranate, cherry, grape, the juices of the vineyard, the crystal liquid of the spring; and then says to his children, 'Come and eat.' The welcome is

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not given to any particular nation or class of men; he does not invite his angels and arch-angels alone; he does not call his saints and prophets; he does not say 'Come' to the Jew, and not also to the Greek, and Roman, and Scythian, and Egyptian, and Irishman, and African; he does not provide a place for the high-priest of the temple, or the rich Pharisee, or the wise teacher, and provide no place for the poor widow, the simple tradesman, the foolish shepherd, and the honest farmer; he does not allow the genteel and well-dressed and high-born to fill the best seats; he sends his servants into the villages and lanes, into the vile places of the city, and they say, 'Come,' not to those who are full, but those who are empty. If the savage holds out his cup, it is filled; if the sinner says, 'Give me my daily bread,' and brings out his plate to receive it, the pitiful elements troop along, and make his dish heavy. The only question asked is, 'Are you hungry?' and this question is asked of everybody, for everybody has a mouth to fill, and a life to be sustained.

“And so when his large mansion is opened,—

his kingly mansion, where the souls of men feast on his truth, — he bids his servant go out and find all whose hearts are hungry for rest, and starving for want of love. And the servant goes out: he goes to the wise and great and powerful; but he does not stop at them; he passes on to the weak and the little. He goes among the Bohemians; he visits the cities of the Pagans; he stops the Roman soldier, and the Greek merchant, and the Arab trader of the desert; he speeds away to the mountain solitudes in quest of the savage and the outlaw; he stops by the pool of Bethesda, and gives the message to the wretched cripples, who lie about on the stone pavement waiting their turn to dip into the healing water; he meets the slave in the field, with his heavy wooden clog on his feet, and asks him if he would not like to come to the great house; if his master is near, he invites him too.

“Fishermen, farmers, shoemakers, — all receive the message. The messenger does not say, ‘Who are you? What is your name? Where do you live? How much can you pay for your dinner? Have you a fine suit of clothes?’ He only says,

‘Have you a sorrow? Have you a trouble? Have you a need?’”

While Jesus was talking earnestly thus to those about him, others near by heard his voice and listened. Presently the conversation among the more distant guests flagged and died away, and the whole table was interested in the eloquent words of the Teacher. Some bent forward that they might not lose a sentence that fell from his lips; some left their seats, and came to stand close by him, that they might hear the better.

As he finished relating his parable, and unfolding the meaning of it, they turned and went away; in little knots talking over what they had heard, with various comment, and much difference of opinion.

A few felt their hearts fill with joy; but the master of the house shook his head, and said to his rich neighbors, “That is dangerous doctrine; it will not be safe for us to hear it, or for the people. We must have no more to do with this man.”

And that was the last time that Jesus was invited to a dinner-party among the fashionable people of Jerusalem.



THE LOST SHEEP.

SO Jesus went about freely in all places, and among all kinds of people, and wherever he went he said, "I am come to ask you to come with me to God's heaven; will you come?"

If he saw a mother crying over her dead boy,

or a beggar sitting by the gate of the town, or a blind man picking his way along the street, or a tired girl sitting by the side of a well, with her pitcher of water, or an old man bowed and stricken with years of grief, he saluted, and said, "Heaven's door is open; will you go in?"

Sometimes he encountered young men, gay and handsome, riding their superb horses in the public square, or walking to attract the public gaze, and sometimes he encountered young women, pale and sick-looking, hurrying home under cover of the night; but he never flattered the young man, nor scorned the young woman. He asked them both alike to come with him to his heaven, telling them what they must do in order to be welcomed there.

If he found a poor creature in the street who looked lonely and desolate, as if all her friends were gone, and there was no more comfort in life, he would take her by the arm, and look into her face, and say, in his deep, tender tones, "My poor child, what is the matter? Have you no protector, no home, no parents, none to help you or love you? Then let me help and love you;

let me be brother and sister to you." The poor creature would look up into the kind face, wondering who it could be that spoke so affectionately to the lost one, and seemed to care for a poor outcast for whom the world cared nothing: she would feel inclined, perhaps, to return a bitter, mocking answer, or to run away, as she had been used to run away from the policemen, who seized her as a vagabond, and dragged her off to prison; but no second glance at the merciful eyes was needed to make her feel at rest with her new friend. She would sit at his feet and hear him talk; she would walk with him, holding by his hand; she would find her hope and courage again; she would give up her feeling of impatience and despair; she would drive away her temptation to vice and crime, and try harder than ever to lead the new life he told her of.

The friends of Jesus thought he gave too much time and care to these outcast people, who were of no account in society, and often remonstrated with him about it. "Why," they asked, "do you not rather try and make friends of the rich, who could build you a splendid church, and pay you a

large sum of money for your teaching? or of the wise, who could understand your beautiful lessons, and take you into their company? or of the powerful, who could get for you the favor and aid of the great who are in authority? or of the priests, who would make brave disciples?"

"What a splendid thing," they urged, "it would be to have such as these as companions and pupils. Your band would soon be strong enough for anything; you could buy up all the votes of Jerusalem; you could bribe the Emperor himself; you could raise an army, if you chose; you could have gentlemen, nobles, princes, in your escort; you could make yourself a victorious leader, a general, a king; you could overthrow the Roman governor; you could make war against the Emperor of the world; you could take possession of Jerusalem, the holy city, and restore its ancient glory as the city of David, and call all the people together there, once more to worship in the great temple; you could raise your nation to such power as it has never seen, and make yourself famous to the end of the earth. Then if you

wanted to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and heal the sick, and comfort the prisoners, how easily you might do it! You could spread broad tables every day in the public square; you could build great hospitals; you could hire nurses and physicians, and ministers of all sorts, by thousands, and could make happy a thousand men and women where now you make happy one."

Jesus was very sad when he heard his friends talk in this way, for he knew that they talked so because they were proud and ambitious; they wanted him to be great in order that they might be great. They did not care about the poor; they did not like the weak and sick; they even hated those who were not good Jews as they were, and thought that Jesus had no business to ask these vulgar people to come into his heaven,—that they had no right to be there at all.

All this made Jesus sad. Besides, he was not a soldier; he did not care for power as a ruler; he was indifferent to fame; he hated war and bloodshed; he did not believe his work could be done by the sword; he did not believe that rich, and learned, and grand people could do his work for him in

any way,—certainly they could not do it in his way,—and he felt sure that he should waste his time and labor on people who were perfectly well satisfied with what they had, and would think they did him a great deal of honor in giving him their friendship.

All this he said again and again, and went on as he had done, ministering to the poor, and keeping company with the lowly.

But one day they had been pressing him hard to change his course of conduct. Some rich men had been offended because he ate his dinner with a poor fellow who earned a living by collecting taxes to support a government they did not like; a person whom no respectable citizen would be seen in company with, or would speak to, the very sight of whom made them so angry that they could not help swearing at him.

This insolent rascal, as they called him, had saluted Jesus, and asked him some question about the way to be happy,—as if such as he could ever expect to be happy; and Jesus not only made a civil reply to his inquiry, but asked him to go home with him, and now has been dining at his table.

"If this is the way," said these high gentlefolks, "your Great Teacher, your Messiah, as you call him, behaves, he is no teacher or Messiah of ours. We think he is an impostor, and we shall tell the governor to keep an eye on him."

Jesus heard what they had to say, and, when they had finished, told them this little story of the Lost Sheep.

Once there was a shepherd who had a flock of a hundred sheep. They were all his care; to watch them, to see that they did not stray away, or fall into pits, or hurt themselves among the stones, to find fresh and green pasturage for them, to protect them from robbers, to defend them against the wolves, was the sole duty of his life. They were like children to him; he called them by pet names, — "White-fleece," "Fair-skin," "Firm-foot," "Quick-ear," "Sharp-nose," "Bob-tail," and so forth; and so accustomed were they to the sound of their names, when he spoke to them, that they answered to his call, and followed their master long distances, simply hearing his voice: a stranger's voice they knew in a moment, and would either remain where they were, or run away,

when they heard it; they were very well-educated and well-bred sheep.

In the pleasant season their master led them about over the hills, pasturing them where the herbage was greenest, as fast as they had cropped one place bare taking them to another. In the glorious nights of the East, when the air was mild and the skies were bright, he used to lie out with them, under the stars, wrapped in his cloak of skins, his faithful dog standing sentinel over the flock; in the daytime he chose some spot from which he could overlook them all, and took pleasure in seeing them feed. When the winter came, and the nights were chilly and dark, he drove them all together into the strong, safe walls of the sheepfold, which stood on the bare side of the hill, carefully locked them in, and left them, feeling quite sure that no harm could touch them there.

One night it so chanced that one of his flock was missing. He counted them over twice, and there were but ninety-nine. The missing one was not one of the finest or the fattest by any means. It was a puny thing, always ailing, and always

getting into trouble. It was more care than all the rest together, and it never would bring a good price in the market. Foolish creature! If there was a wrong path to take, it would surely take it; if there was a ditch to tumble into, it certainly would tumble in; if there was any way of losing itself, the silly thing would inevitably find it; in fact, it was always losing itself, never finding itself. Often and often it was picked up in dangerous places, and brought back, with "torn fleece and eyes full of fear." One of its legs had been lamed by a fall into a well; on one shoulder was a great scar left by a wolf's paw that it had narrowly escaped from; and now it was gone again, no one knew whither.

The night was coming on fast, the wind was blowing bleak across the hills; it was growing cold, and the great black clouds were rolling up the sky. What should the shepherd do? Leave the poor thing to its fate? let it go, if it would go, to its destruction? stay and take care of the more valuable sheep, that would pay him for watching them with their fleeces? He did not hesitate. "The other sheep," he said, "can take care of

themselves ; they are strong and hearty, wise, too, and discreet ; they can do very well without me. I shall not be much afraid to leave them by themselves all night on the open plain ; but that poor little, weak, absurd, nonsensical creature, what will become of it ? How lonely it must be ! how scared, how tired, how cold and hungry ! Perhaps it has fallen over a precipice ; perhaps a wolf or jackal is making a supper of it this very moment ; perhaps — a hundred perhapses — I must go and find it at all hazards.”

So he tightens his belt round his waist, seizes his staff, and sets forth on his journey. He goes he knows not whither. Nothing but instinct directs him, — the instinct of love, — and that leads him where he knows there is the most danger. He marches over the rough hill-side, across the wild pasture-land ; he fords the deep, rushing stream ; he passes one spot which is terrible because of a murder that was done there, and another spot which is terrible as the lair of wolves.

I cannot describe the adventures he met with. Let it be enough to say that, as he stumbled

along, he listened every moment for the well-known cry of his little deserter; listened and listened, but did not hear it till he was far away in a desert place, out of all reach of men. Then he heard it. It seemed faint, like the wail of a child in pain and distress. He followed it by the sound as well as he could, and at length, close by the verge of a precipice, he discovered his darling in a great bed of thorns. How he got there, it would be hard to tell; but there he was, faint and bleeding with his struggles to get out. One large spine was aimed at his throat, another pierced his breast, others tore his legs and sides. The shepherd, making tender exclamations and saying piteous words all the time, put his hand into the thicket, pushed aside the sharp twigs, and at last drew the poor creature out, half dead. A little milk from his bottle restored him in a few minutes; then he took the melancholy creature on his shoulder, put him round his neck like a great fur collar, holding his legs in front, and trudged homeward.

How happy he was! Whistling and singing, he sprang along the path, now caressing his nestling

charge, now scolding it affectionately for running away, calling it simple and foolish, but all the time light of heart, and thinking no more of his long travel, his loss of time, his fatigue, or the peril of his other ninety-nine, than if nothing of the kind existed to trouble him; not so much, indeed. It was a good deal better than if the silly thing had behaved itself, so it seemed to him, as a lost thing found is always more precious than a thing never lost. The unhappy creature who had given him so much anxiety and care, and who was worth so little as mutton or as wool, was worth to his heart more than twenty fat sheep that would have made the rich man's dinner, or clothed the rich man's back. He would not exchange it for a dozen. When he reached home, he made it the softest bed of straw, clean and sweet, and nursed it like a baby. He gave the rest of the flock all they wanted, of course; but this little unfortunate, who had no fat, no beauty, no discretion, no wool, — who had nothing but ignorance, and stupidity, and foolishness, and the power of getting into trouble, — received the best he had.

He told the story of the runaway to all his neighbors; and when they said to him, "You were a silly fellow to take so much pains for such a wretched imbecile as that," he replied, "I did it because he was an imbecile; the more need of love, the more right to love; the more love given, the more love felt: he would be a bad shepherd, and a worse man, who let the little ones perish, when the little ones were the only ones that wanted or asked for his help."

Now, my dear children, this little story is told for you just as much as it was told for those people who heard it from the lips of the Teacher, who called himself the Good Shepherd. Suppose that this Good Shepherd were alive now. Among what sort of people do you think he would go? Whom would he seek? Would he be found among the comfortable, and safe, and happy? Would he be seen working for those who had ever so many friends to take care of them, and teach them, and see that they did not go wrong? Would he spend his time with those who never suffered, who never cried, who never did what they ought not to do, nor left undone what they

ought to do? Would he take the good little children up in his arms and kiss them, because they were good, and let the bad children, who might be made good, go where they would?

I think not; he would be with those who have the greatest need of him; and who are they but the homeless, the orphaned, the poor, the sick, the unpitied, the untaught, the unloved? You would see him in the out-of-the-way streets and lanes of the city, where the drunken and the miserable live in garrets and cellars; you would find him in the jails and alms-houses, among the newsboys, in the ragged-schools; he would go to such places as the Five Points in New York, North Street in Boston, St. Giles's in London, in search of poor girls who had gone astray, and of thieves, who broke into houses at night,—not as the policeman goes, to seize and shut up in prison, but as the angels go, to teach, and persuade, and win back by love.

He would spend days with the bad boys at Randall's and Thompson's Islands, and would be perfectly happy when he could bring one of them away, and put him in a good family, where he might grow up an honest man.

He would seek the murderer in his cell, and pray with him; he would stop the ruffian in the street, and call him brother, and beg him to leave his wicked life.

If he met some poor creature whom nobody seemed to love, who, because nobody loved her, was becoming wild and desperate and wicked, he would stop her; he would take her by the arm, and look into her face, and say, "Come with me: I love you; let me be your brother."

Always going after the lost sheep, because the lost sheep are the suffering and unhappy sheep,—the sheep who have no homes, who have nobody to feed them or be kind to them. And he goes after them to give them a home, to give them food and kindness. Why should he? Because they deserve it? No, but because they need it. He goes after the lost because he wishes to save the lost. The Good Shepherd thinks that one soul is worth saving as much as another, and therefore he takes care of those who would not be saved but for him.

Does it not seem to you that those who do wrong ought to be pitied because they do wrong?

—ought to be pitied because they have not the happiness of doing right, because they are tormented by violent passions, and are wild with evil wishes? They have no love, or peace, or joy in them; the sun is not bright to them, the fair landscape is not pleasing, the morning is not glad; they do not love to look in the face of those that love them; kind words make no impression on their hearts. O how unhappy they are! And if they do not know how unhappy they are, if they do not know how many lovely things they lose, if they shut themselves into the outer darkness, then they are most unhappy, and most to be pitied, and the Good Shepherd is more than ever anxious to bring them back to goodness.

A wise Persian offered this prayer: "O God, bless the wicked, for thou hast done enough for the good in making them good." It was such a prayer as that, that Jesus was offering all the time.

So, when you do wrong, do not think the Good Shepherd will forget you: it is then he will come after you. You will hear him call you most tenderly then, you will feel him pulling at your heart; something within you will tell you he is not far off: if nothing tells you so, it is true that

he is not far off. He will look at you through the eyes of some kind teacher; he will whisper to you from the lips of your mother; he will talk to you lower than in a whisper, when you are alone with your foolish heart. Do not think you will get out of his way where he cannot find you; do not be afraid he will be tired of looking after you; think of him as coming swift and sure, and when you think of that, stop, do not go any further, remain where you are, or go back, so that he can find you with less trouble.

It is a very sad thing to be a lost sheep, to run away, and be all alone, cold and trembling, in danger of being run over by horses, worried by dogs, eaten by wolves, or carried away to the slaughter-house by hard-hearted men. One would not like to be a lost sheep, if it were only for the pain and peril and sorrow of it; but when one thinks that, if he gets lost, the good, tender Shepherd must take so much trouble to find him again, must travel so far over the rough stones, into the wilderness, through the night and storm, must suffer so much from hunger, and be so pale and weary and anxious, he certainly feels like praying that he may never run away from the fold.



THE PRODIGAL SON.

WHEN Jesus had ended his story of the sheep, his listeners stood silent, as if thinking over in themselves the meaning of the parable, when one, not so easily satisfied as the rest, spoke up, and said:—

“Yes, Master, that is a beautiful story; but

there is a difference between sheep and men. Of course a shepherd will go after his lambkin, for it is a brute creature that knows no better than to run away; it has no sense, it does not know right from wrong, and it would be cruel to let it perish just because it is stupid and silly, and cannot help itself. But men have minds and consciences; when they do wrong they know it, when they go out of the way they mean to go out of the way; they do it on purpose, and because they like to do it; it gives them pleasure. Should they be treated like sheep? Should they be travelled after, and found, and tenderly brought home? Should not they be suffered to go if they will, and to lose themselves if they will, and to die if they will? It is their own fault if they perish."

Jesus looked at the speaker, and a tear filled his eye, came to the brim, and rolled slowly down his cheek like a pearl. He did not dispute with the man, nor reason with him; it was not his custom to reason or dispute. If men did not see the truth he showed them, he had nothing further to say; but he was never tired of showing them the truth.

After a pause of a few minutes, during which the people watched him, wondering what he would reply, he began, and, in a low voice, told this story of the Prodigal.

A certain man had two sons, very unlike in their dispositions. The elder was sober-minded and grave; his passions, if he had any passions, were always under control, and had been from boyhood. He never seemed to want anything he ought not to have, nor to desire anything that was not set before him; he had no taste for fun, frolic, or pleasure; he never robbed an orchard, or stripped a pear-tree, or plundered a poultry-yard; he was never seen prowling near his mother's cake-chest, or putting his fingers into the jelly-pots; he was never caught playing truant, nor marked for being late at school, nor suspected of naughty pranks on the schoolmaster, but was fond of his books, always brought home a medal for good conduct, always did whatever his elders bade him.

On growing up to manhood he had stayed quietly in his father's house, and now devoted himself to the care of his father's estates. He

watched the farmers in the field, saw to the planting and gathering of crops, carried the corn and grain to market, paid the men for their labor, kept the account-books, and so forth. He was a good son; never went away from home, and never wished to go; never kept company with the young men of the village, nor with the young women either; never went to evening parties; never smoked, danced, or played cards; never asked his friends to dinner, or spent the amount of ten cents at the theatre, or any place of amusement. His temperament was cold, his habits reserved, his tastes were quiet. Such was the elder son.

His brother was unlike him in every way; impulsive, quick, generous, eager, warm in his affections, ardent in his desires, restless and rapid in his movements, cheerful and gay in his disposition, fond of pleasure, fond of society, craving the excitement of novelty, and sensitive to every kind of beauty in nature and in art,—full of wants that his brother never felt, and that the still life of the country could not supply. He never entered with the least interest into the tame pursuits

of his father's house. As a boy, he was more fond of play than he was of books; more pleased to rove away in the fields than he was to stay at home. As a young man, he hungered and thirsted for adventure, longed to go and see the world, hung with delight over the stories of the great, rich cities, and the joys therein, and dreamed of the time when he should be able to take his place and play his part in the wide world.

These visions of happiness haunted his mind to such a degree, he became so impatient under the limits of his existence, that he felt as if he could not any longer endure his mode of life. His father's house, comfortable, pleasant, large, friendly as it was, had grown to be intolerable to him,—it seemed to be a prison; though he had everything his father could give, that was not enough; it was not what he wanted, he must go away.

So one day, when the mood of discontent was on him, he went to his father, told him how he felt, and begged that he might have then the sum that would fall to him by inheritance on his parent's death. The father reasoned with the lad, remonstrated with him, set before him all the

dangers he would encounter, drew a vivid picture of the temptations that would be thrown in his path, and, with tears in his eyes, begged him to give up so wild and perilous a purpose. All was of no avail, the youth was bent on his experiment; and finally the old man, seeing that he was fixed, gave his unwilling consent, settled on him his portion of the patrimony, and bade him go his own way.

Overjoyed, the young man departed, with pleasure dancing in his eyes, and dreams of all lovely things flitting before his imagination. His heart was pure, his spirit buoyant, his hope high, his trust boundless in his own innocence and in the virtue of his fellow-men. He had the great hunger for happiness which seems to carry the promise with it that happiness shall be good, and nothing but good.

He went far off, out of his own country, to the mighty city of Babylon, whose wealth and splendor and luxury drew strangers from every part of the earth. There were the mighty walls, sixty miles in circumference, and hundreds of feet high; there were the gardens lifted on terraces above

the roofs of the tallest houses, fringing the walls with verdure, a wonder over all the East; there were the massive gates of bronze; there were the vast squares, where armies could wheel and march, and the king's bands could play martial music, and not be heard from side to side; there were the huge piles of architecture, covering acres of ground, rising on arches tier above tier, and making the Eastern day more gorgeous with their roofs of gold; there were the gilded statues of god and goddess, and the stupendous temples that made the famous one at Jerusalem look small and cheap; there was kingship and nobility, and pomp and pride,—streets roaring with the traffic of Egypt, Arabia, India, Phœnicia,—warehouses heaped with gems, gold of Ophir, fabrics from Tyre, arms from Ashdod and Ascalon, silks from Damascus; there were the men and costumes of all nations of the earth; there was art, literature, philosophy, science, religion, flourishing as one could see them nowhere else in the world;—Babylon, the city of the Orient, the gem of the Asiatic continent, the diamond which the conquerors and emperors of the globe fought for,

wore as the chief jewel of their crowns, and made magnificent at the expense of kingdoms.

To this superb city—an empire in a city—the young man took his journey, in the flush of his first manhood. He was handsome, rich, attractive, with an endless capacity for joy. He hired rooms, the costliest he could find, in the fashionable quarter; he sought the society of young men like himself, who could instruct him in the gayeties of the town; he gave exquisite dinners and suppers, which were the envy of the epicures; he had his chariot on the race-course, his blood horses, his grooms and liveried servants, always shining on the square at the hour when the fast young men of the city drove out to show the splendor of their equipages before the bright eyes of the Babylonish ladies.

His life was a ceaseless round of merry-making, but it was merry-making that brought him into the company of the vicious, who taught him the fascinations of vice, and led him deeper and deeper into its dangerous mysteries. He became acquainted with every form of elegant dissipation; he was known as the fastest young man in Baby-

lon, and that was saying a great deal, for Babylon was the fastest city in all the East.

But all this luxury costs money: nothing is so expensive as vice. He had not lived more than a year or two in Babylon when his funds gave out. For a time he went on in his extravagance, getting deeper and deeper in debt, till at length no man would trust him any more. His rooms were let, his elegant furniture seized by his creditors, his horses and coaches sold. He was obliged to hide himself from the people whom he had not paid; his gay company, men and women, cast him off, and would have no more to do with him; he skulked about from street to street, living in third and fourth rate boarding-houses, till he was turned out on the pavement, begging a little money here, borrowing a little there, glad to earn a penny now and then as porter or waiter.

He wore his faded finery, all threadbare and out at the elbows; he went often days without a dinner. At last he was reduced to such extremity that he hired himself out as a swineherd,—this elegant young Jew, who had grown up to look on swine as utterly disgusting animals, and would

have had as much horror at the thought of eating pig as we have at the thought of eating spiders or snakes. He would not once have touched a pig on any account whatever,—even to look at one made him feel unclean. Now his business was to tend pigs. He had to live with them in the pens and yards.

There came a famine just at this time in the country; food was dear; only the rich had enough to eat; the moderately well-to-do continued, by much economy, to subsist; the poor lived on the brink of starvation; such as he starved; no man gave him anything; he munched and swallowed as well as he could the husks which were flung to the swine.

While thus miserable, he recollected what he had been; he recalled the days when he was comfortable and happy; he thought of his father's house, his pleasant room there, his little bed, his seat at table, the kindness, the health, the innocence. He wondered how they all were there; whether he was forgotten; whether they ever spoke of him, and how they spoke: he fancied the servants carrying in dinner, and sitting down

themselves to a dinner, the very imagination of which made his mouth water: why, the very field-hands at his father's wasted every day bread and meat enough to support him a week, and the cattle fared better than he, the darling son.

He became so homesick as he thought of all this, it seemed as if he must die. He would sit for hours crying as if his heart would break. He would have gone home had he dared; he would have walked the whole distance, all those hundreds of miles, among mountains, across deserts, with naked feet, but he was afraid. How could he face his father? He had run away, he had gone to a strange and far-off city, he had spent all his money in riot and luxury, he had made himself a disgrace to all the family, perhaps he had broken his poor old father's heart. He was an idler, a vagabond, a drunkard, a gambler; his beauty was gone; he could only go home as a beggar, to be pointed at, and talked at, and perhaps pushed out of the door by a servant. Could he submit to that? Would it not be better to die at once than meet such ignominy as that?

Finally he made up his mind to go. He would

go just as he was; he would go in his dirt and rags; he would go as a beggar; he would make no excuses for himself, but would confess all his foolishness and wickedness. He would not ask to be taken home again as a son, or to be received as one who had the least claim to kindness; he would only ask to be hired as one of the workmen on the place, and to be paid the usual wages for the work he was able to do,—that was all. And with this resolution, thoroughly penitent, humble, and sincere, he took his staff, and began making his way back to his father's house. It was a long way, indeed, and a weary way, for one who journeyed as he did, alone. Alas! what rivers he had to swim or wade across; what marshes to plod through, assailed by loathsome reptiles of the mud; what hills to climb; what sandy wastes to cross with blistering feet! What fearful nights were those in the wilderness, with only stones for a pillow, or oftener no pillow at all, but a long fight to keep off the wolves who prowled about to devour his miserable carcass! What fearful days, spent in toiling through sand, and gleaning such bits of food as the solitude

supplied, — a few locusts, the gum from an occasional shrub, or a little honey deposited by the wild bees in some cleft of the rock, — with weeks of such days and nights before him, wearing him to the bone!

Meanwhile at his father's house there was remembrance of him. For some time after his departure he was continually talked of. His brother, not lovingly, but dutifully, at his father's bidding, went daily to the market-place when the caravans, with their long trains of camels, came in from the East, to ask if such a man as his brother had been seen. His father stayed at home, waiting, wondering, anxious, his face paling, his forehead becoming furrowed, his form bending lower with grief, as week after week passed, and no tidings came of his boy.

They had almost ceased inquiring, when one day there arrived a merchant who had seen the youth at Babylon, and could tell, not much, but something, about him, — of the reputation he bore in the great city as a man of fashion. He repeated the rumors current about his wild life, his extravagance, his luxury, his fast style of

living, his loose companions, his dissolute and unprincipled career. He was pointed out to the merchant at the theatre, where he sat laughing among his comrades, with a woman decked out in jewels at his side. It must have been the same person, for the description corresponded with that of the person they asked for, though the gay Babylonian was very handsome indeed, and did not look in the least as if he had been country bred.

He was alive, then, but was worse than dead, he was found, but only more fatally and past finding lost; he was happy, but yet more miserable than the father had dared to fear. The old man spoke of him now with sorrow and pity.

"Ah, my poor boy! my poor boy!" he would cry, the tears filling his eyes, and running down his cheeks, "why did I let him go? Why was I so weak as to give him all that money? Why did I not understand him better? Why did I not see that his home here was stupid for him, and try harder than I did to make it bright and happy? Why did I not love him so much that he *could* not go away from me? It is all my fault. I gave him

his ardent temper, his high spirit, his taste for wandering and adventure, his relish for society, his keen enjoyment of life; and then I shut up my noble youth in this dull prison, where he could only break his beautiful wings against the bars. I gave him the thirst for pleasure, and refused him pleasure; I gave him fulness of life, and denied him life's satisfactions; I gave him the quick, responsive, sensitive nature which was sure to lead him into temptation, and then gave him the means to stray and fall, without a single safeguard of education or virtue. Of course he ran away; of course he went to the gay city, and saw its beauty, and was intoxicated, and I shall never see him again, not even to tell him how sorry I am for him, how much I love him. O my poor boy! my poor boy!"

"Poor boy indeed!" cried out the elder brother, when the old man spoke in this way; "poor boy indeed! a drunkard, a gambler, a horse-jockey, the companion of vile women, a spendthrift, a runaway. Poor boy!—poor fool, poor wretch, poor vagabond! What else could you expect from such a lazy, scatter-brained, useless fellow as he always

was? He was always full of some mischief or other; he never earned his salt. The farm would have run to weeds long ago, sooner than he would have given a day's attention to it. For my part, I shall think no more about him, and I wish you would not. Let him go; he is doing precisely what he always wanted to do; why not let him go on and have his way, and see the end of it and the folly of it. He has chosen to sow wild oats, let him reap wild oats, and if he cannot feed on such a crop, let him starve. He has not come to starvation yet, it seems; he is jolly enough now;—much jollier than you or I. It appears to me, when you speak of him sometimes, as if you loved him more the worse he was, and went deeper in your pity as he went deeper in his sin. Very flattering that to some of the rest of us, who are good boys, and never sin at all."

The old man seldom made reply to these bitter speeches of the elder brother. Once or twice he was roused to argue with him, to remonstrate, to explain, but he only made the matter worse than it had been before; the conversation became a dispute; they had parted more than once in

anger. His son could not understand the younger brother, and had better not be led to speak of him.

At length came news that the young man had disappeared. He had spent his money, and lost his credit; his rooms were empty, his horses were sold, his finery had been seized by the officers. He had vanished, nobody knew where; probably he was hiding from his creditors in some other part of the country, or he might be skulking about among the dens of the great city. At any rate, the bubble had burst in the air, and probably nothing would ever be heard of it again.

"Well, well," said his brother, "let us hope we never may hear of him again; let us hope that he is dead, and out of the way of temptation. If he lives, he will live only to suffer and sin, perhaps to sin worse, perhaps to steal, perhaps even to kill, and so bring on us the last disgrace of crime. Death, and death alone, can save him from beggary and pauperism, and the last shame of the poor-house or the jail. Let us hope he is dead; then our minds will be relieved of all anxiety about him."

"O no!" exclaimed the father, "let us not hope

he is dead ; let us hope he may be alive, and may come back to us. If I only knew where he was, I would go to him, I would go myself and seek him ; but now I can only pray that he may come to himself, and seek us. You need not tell me he has been weak and foolish, and has brought it all on himself. I know that ; but what has he brought on himself?—think of that. Poverty, hunger, thirst, exposure, scorn, shame, misery of every sort. O, my son, these are terrible things to bear ; these are frightful punishments even for great sin, and he is not a great sinner ; he is weak, giddy, wild, passionate, but he is not desperately wicked ; he always had a kind and generous heart, and a certain nobleness of soul that would not allow him to sink into the last degradation. There is hope of him yet,—that if he could be found and rescued he might be a useful, good, and happy man. He is very young, and all this bitter experience may subdue and steady him, and save him from all danger in the future. But, at any rate, whether he can be brought back to virtue or not, he may be brought to repentance, and we ought to wish him to live for that. And if goodness is

one way of making people penitent, we ought to wish Heaven would put it in our power to be good to him. As for suffering, surely he has inflicted enough of that on himself to spare us the necessity of inflicting any. It is for us to help and bless him, if we can. God grant he may come home, and give us a chance to show that we love him, and enable us, by our love, to hold him by his heart-strings."

So the old man yearned for his prodigal boy, and waited for him, trusting that the good which was in his heart would respond, and lead him back with a yearning as great and tender as his own, deeply believing that misery and squalor and shame would recall him to himself. Every night he prayed earnestly for his boy; every morning he opened his windows, and looked out towards the east, half expecting to see in the distance the well-known form walking along the road; every day, when the elder son had gone into the field, he sat and thought of all the chances and dangers, till his heart sometimes sunk within him, and sometimes beat so strongly with hope that he started from his chair, and went to the door

One afternoon the assurance grew so great in him, that he went and stood on the door-stone fronting the east, and, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed earnestly out on the landscape. The air was still, the sky was clear and calm, the gray olive-trees threw a heavy shadow on the ground, the hot sun was just beginning to lose its power as it sped westward towards its going down. In the distance something moved, which seemed to be the figure of a man. It drew nearer, but slowly, and with irresolute motion; he stopped, rested beneath the olive-trees;—was he tired, or was he sick?

He comes out of the shadow towards the house; but no, not towards the house, towards the barns. It may be a prowling thief, some vagrant slinking about to find a lodging in the hay-loft. Poor he plainly is, and he comes from far. He is ragged and wild-looking; his beard is long and tangled. Who can it be? He is sitting now on a stone, looking towards the house. The old man watches him with an interest which deepens in intensity every instant. Something tells him who it is.

Just then the haggard stranger makes a movement that is not to be mistaken. It is he. And at once, without speaking a word, the father runs to him, flings his arm about him, presses the head against his bosom, puts his lips to his forehead, and bursts into a flood of tears.

The boy tries to fall on his knees, but the father holds him up; tries to hide his shameful face, but the father turns it towards him, and gazes at it with unutterable tenderness; tries to murmur penitence and pardon, but the lips are stopped by kisses.

"Don't love me so," sobbed the youth at last; "don't kiss me so; I don't deserve to be loved; I don't merit your kisses; I am not your son any more. Let me go to the stables; let me go to the kitchen; give me a crust in charity,—it is all I ask. I am a poor, broken, worthless fellow; I cannot even ask your pardon."

"Hush, hush!" said the father, "you are my son, for you come back to me. Come in, come in, I have been waiting for you so long! Ho there! make ready the bath, get out the finest linen, go to my wardrobe, and bring my best

robe. You, go instantly, and call in the neighbors; you, go and kill the fatted calf, and see that supper is ready at once."

In a few minutes all was bustle and work in the house. The servants ran to and fro; the guest-chamber was opened and aired; the table was laid in the great dining-room. The business of making ready a feast went merrily forward. Very soon guests began to arrive, wondering what cause of rejoicing there might be in the old, dull house. Musicians came with their instruments; from top to bottom of the mansion all was astir.

All this time the elder brother was ploughing at the farthest corner of the farm. As the sun went down he finished his work, and leisurely sauntered towards the house. To his great surprise he saw the windows all open, and lights flitting to and fro, and servants running in and out with a haste that indicated that some extraordinary event had occurred. What could it be? Was it music, too, he heard?

"This is all very strange," he said to himself; "I must make some inquiry into this;" and calling

one of the servants who was almost too much out of breath to speak a word, he said, "What is it? What is the matter?"

"Why, do you not know? Have you not heard that your brother has come back? We are very busy getting up a welcome for him. We have killed the fatted calf, and sent out ever so many invitations. And your father means to make a grand feast."

"Humph! in that case I will go in by the back way, and get out of sight. I don't want to see the beggar; his coming does not make me feel merry. If I am asked for, say I am sick, and gone to my chamber."

The man went in, and told the father, who knew at once what the matter was, and came out. He found the elder brother surly and sour, and deaf to all entreaty.

"A pretty piece of business this," he muttered. "Here have I been at home all these years, never went away, never left my work, never did a single thing to displease you, never gave you an anxious moment, never caused you a grief, and what did I ever get for it? When did you ever have a

merry-making for me? You never killed so much as a poor kid in my honor. But here comes this beggar, this dissipated rascal, this broken-down gambler and scamp, who never did anything but break your heart, and you can't do enough for him. He must have the fine linen and the costly robe, while I must dress like a ploughman; he must have his friends to supper, with the fatted calf and the old wine, while I eat barley-bread; he must be the fine gentleman, having singers and dancers to entertain him, while I am nobody. It is too bad; I will not endure it; and you may take your choice, either him or me. If he stays with you, I go; if I stay, he must go."

"Fie, fie," replied the father, "how can you be so unreasonable. You know very well that all I had was yours; that you could see your friends whenever you liked. There was never need that you should ask me for anything, since everything was yours; there was no need that I should offer you anything, for the same reason. You were always at home, and of course could not have a grand reception, as if you were a stranger; you were never starving, and so never required the

tenderest food; you were never naked, and so never had occasion for the best clothing; you were never suffering, nor sick, nor worn, consequently it was never needful to comfort you, or nurse you, or show you any special kindness; you never committed an offence, and therefore you never prayed for pardon, or were in condition to receive tenderness in the form of forgiveness. I could not lavish love on you, who did not crave it. But with your brother it is wholly different. Cannot you see that it is? He has of his own will chosen to come home from his long wandering. He is poor, thin, pale, sick, he needs care; he is sorry, he needs love; he is penitent, he needs pity. We have him once more who for so long was not ours. He is at home again. We must make his home happy, that he may not be tempted away from it any more; we must make him feel that we love him, that he may love us too. Come in, and do your part."

But the angry brother would not relent, so the father went back alone. The evening passed gayly, with loud congratulations on all sides that the father had recovered his lost boy.

And the boy from that time lived at home, a sober, industrious, and useful man, wearing an expression of sadness on his face always, as if some secret sorrow or guilt was preying on his mind. His father had forgiven him, but he could not so easily forgive himself for wounding that kindest of hearts. The kinder the heart showed itself, the sharper his pain. The thought of his ingratitude never left him, and it was the bitterest when his father was tenderest. Every word of love was a sting; every kiss caused him more anguish than a scourge of thorns would have done; every look of affection came nigh breaking him down with remorse; every expression of joy that he had come home, made him sensible afresh of the misery he had inflicted on that home by going away. He would have been glad sometimes to hear his father scold him, load him with reproaches, upbraid him with his guilt. This constant compassion was more than he could bear.

For a time his brother's coldness was a relief to him, because, by punishing him, it spared him the necessity of punishing himself more severely; it

lightened the burden of his self-reproach ; it made him feel a little like excusing himself, or apologizing for himself ; it allowed him to fancy that he was harshly judged. But after a time, his brother, softened by his patience, began to relent towards him, and he had not now even the poor consolation of being callous and hard on that side. He was tender all over, and all over he suffered agonies of shame and sorrow and remorse.

To make amends for the unhappiness he had caused to those who loved him so much, he did all in his power now to please them. He helped his brother in his work ; he went with his father in his walks ; he stayed at home with him in the evening ; he was good to the poor ; he interested himself in the young men and women of the village, and was known by all as the best of sons, the kindest of brothers, the most constant and generous of friends. The shade of sadness was ever on his face, but it was sweeter and more comforting than the smiles of other people. The tear came often to his eye, warm with true sympathy with sorrow and sin. It was a drop of balm from a broken heart.

So he lived to show to all men the power of pardon, the regenerating might of a kiss, the joy there is among the angels in the heart when the wandering come home again, and the lost are found.



THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

IT was the habit of Jesus, as I have told you, to gather people about him in the public square, or under the awning over a wide street, and talk to them. On these occasions, any who wished, asked questions to satisfy their curiosity, or to bring on an argument.

There was almost always somebody near who

was ready to dispute with him, and very often his enemies mingled with the crowd, and threw out remarks, to make him say something that they could take hold of and turn against him.

One day a lawyer, who was passing by when Jesus was teaching, stopped to hear what he had to say. The conversation was, as usual, about the eternal life, the perfect happiness.

"But how can one have this eternal life?" cried out the lawyer, loudly. "How can one get this perfect happiness? It is all very well to talk about the perfect happiness, but how can one obtain it?—that is the question."

Jesus turned round to him, and answered, "Why, you ought to know; it is your business to understand the Law of Moses and the Scriptures, where the Law is written. You have been studying them all your life, and they talk of little else. What do the Law and the Scriptures say about it?"

"O," replied the man, "the Law says, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.'"

"Does it say nothing more?"

"Yes; it says, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"Very well," returned Jesus, "you have answered your own question. Do this,—love your neighbor as you love yourself, and the eternal blessedness shall be yours."

"Nay," cried the man, wishing to show his wit, and to puzzle the Great Teacher, "that is not so simple as you seem to think it."

This lawyer was one of those who study the Bible, not to find out what it means, but to make it mean what they like. He knew so much about it that he did not know anything; he had read it till its truth was all read away, because he did not read it with his heart, because he used it to practise his wit on. He could dispute about the Scriptures all day long; he could twist and turn it in all directions; he could make the easiest sentences so dark that you could not see any sense in them, and could find so many meanings in common words that at last they had no meaning whatever. There was a good chance for him to show how sharp and knowing he was.

"It is not so simple," said he, "as you seem to think. I am to love my neighbor as myself. Good: but what do you understand by the word neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Is it the man who lives next door? or across the way? or in the square hard by? Is it my rich friend, who gives the dinner parties and has the elegant suppers? Is it my first or second cousin? or is it the member of the same tribe, my countryman or my clansman? You may mean by neighbor somebody I never saw, or somebody I see every day; somebody I like, or somebody I don't like; it makes a great deal of difference whether you mean one or the other."

He spoke all this in a loud voice, and looked about him with an expression of triumph, as if he would say, "What do you think of that now? Was not that smart? Was not that a good hit? See how easy it is to stop the mouth of this wise man."

Jesus took no notice of the man's tone or look, but quietly replied, "Perhaps I can best answer your question by telling you a story."

And this is the story which Jesus told him.

A man was once travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He went that way because, being a good Jew, he wished to avoid passing through Samaria; but it was a dangerous journey. Jericho was about seventeen miles from Jerusalem, towards the northeast. It was a very old city, and before the Israelites came from Egypt into the Holy Land, it was the richest and strongest of thirty cities, each of which had a king of its own. This was the city, you will remember, whose walls, according to the ancient Bible story, fell down at the blowing of Joshua's trumpets. Joshua destroyed the city, but it was rebuilt, and in the days of Jesus was very handsome, with grand fortifications and noble palaces. Great numbers of priests lived there, some say several thousand. Their duties were in Jerusalem, but Jericho was their home. It was a splendid city; but its name was "Vapor," and it has passed away like a cloud, so completely that the place where it rested can hardly be recognized.

The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was exceedingly wild. Soon after leaving the beau-

tiful valley, with its dense groves and sparkling water-courses, in the midst of which the latter city stood, the traveller entered on a rugged, mountainous region. The verdure by degrees disappeared, until at length not a bush, not so much as a blade of grass, could be seen. The surface of the ground was covered with loose stones, sometimes thrusting sharp edges out of the soil, and sometimes broken into small pieces, and looking as if it had been burned by volcanic fires. The road ran along the edge of steep precipices and yawning chasms, or ran beneath them, and was overhung by crags, fierce and threatening. The aspect of the whole region was very savage and desolate. The mountains seemed to have been started from their foundations and torn in pieces by some frightful convulsion which rent them from their base, and left them to be scathed and cracked by the terrific heat of the sun.

The journey was an exceedingly slow and painful one. The motion of the horse in clambering up and down the steep ragged places was tiresome to the last degree. Every step of the poor beast

as he went jerking and jolting along over the sharp stones racked the whole body and lamed every limb. The heat of the sun, beating directly down, or reflected from the walls of rock, was intense, and there was hardly a resting-place the whole dismal distance. Added to all this discomfort was the terror of robbers, who lurked in the caverns and gorges of the mountains, leaped out like wild beasts on the unarmed or unwary traveller, pillaged him, beat him, killed him perhaps, and in a few minutes were safe from pursuit among the crags. One part of the road was so famous for these deeds of plunder and blood, that it was called "Adummim," the bloody way.

About half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho the valley widened. Here there was a natural fountain gushing by the road-side, a rude stone basin that made a trough for watering horses, and an inn, or khan, as it was called, built of stones, very roughly piled together. It was a poor place, scarcely better than a cave, but it promised shelter and rest, and something like refreshment after hard travelling, and the sight of it, small as it was, was hailed with joy by the pilgrim, scorched and

thirsty, and ready to drop from his saddle from fatigue.

But to our story. It was on this road, going from Jerusalem, that a man was riding alone. He was an unknown man, not rich or high-born, or great in office; some merchant or artisan whom business called away from the great city. He had passed what was perhaps the severest part of the way, — that where the rocky road descended some two thousand feet from the mountains about Jerusalem to the plain, — and had reached a little grassy nook at no great distance from the inn we have described. At this point a band of ruffians dashed out upon him. Being alone, he was quickly overpowered and beaten down with heavy blows, his money was taken, his clothes were stripped off in the twinkling of an eye, and the rogues were away in the hills, leaving him bruised, bloody, stunned, half dead in the road.

There he lay, — not a soul in sight, not a house near enough for his groans to be heard. He was too weak to shout, and even if he had been able he would not have dared to make a noise, lest the

robbers should be lingering near, and, hearing him, should come back and finish their work by killing him to prevent his telling tales.

Thus he lay for some hours listening for footsteps. At last he heard them with his quick ear, somebody was coming. Yes, somebody was coming: there was hope. The hope became very strong indeed when, turning his eyes in the direction whence the sound came, he saw that the traveller was a priest, a holy man, devoted to offices of religion, and even then probably intent on some pious work. He must be one of the brotherhood of Jericho on his way to Jerusalem to assist at the great festival which was to take place there the next day. How fortunate that it was a priest, and a priest of rank, too! Not some trader, some merchant, some rich gentleman, who would not think it worth his while to stop for such a poor fellow as he was! How fortunate it was a Jew, and not some hateful Samaritan, who might stop and kick him as he lay in his blood and agony.

The priest came nearer: he was making haste; he was urging his horse to his utmost speed.

"Good, kind soul!" murmured the wounded man. "He has seen me, he is making all possible speed to come to me without an instant's delay. Ah, God bless him! I hope he will not break his horse's legs or his own neck in his impatience to reach me with his succor. He must have everything I want, and he is a servant of God."

Yes, the priest was making haste, there was no doubt about that; but unfortunately his haste was not due quite to his anxiety to help his wounded countryman and fellow-citizen out of his difficulty. On the contrary, he was simply anxious to get to the end of his journey before nightfall, and have a comfortable sleep to prepare him for his duties on the following morning. Those duties were exceedingly important and heavy. He must clean and fill the lamps of the golden chandelier, he must set out the shewbread, he must feed the fire on the grand altar and take away all the ashes, he must prepare some of the victims for sacrifice, and be ready to wave the burnt flesh in the air before the Lord. besides all this, which was enough of itself to occupy the whole day, he had to count the money

in the poor-box, and to blow the great brass trumpets several times in the course of the day — a labor which required a vast deal of breath and was not to be done by anybody who had not enjoyed a good night's rest. Absorbed in thoughts so deep and serious, he could not loiter on his way. At this particular moment he was urging his beast very hard, for this part of the road had a bad name; several murders had been committed there lately, and the thieves would as soon attack a priest as any other. Suddenly he came upon the wounded man, and heard him implore aid.

"Ah!" said he to himself, "robbers about; must make haste; should not like to be stopped and plundered, should very much dislike to be knocked on the head. What would they do in the temple to-morrow if I was not there to kill the sheep and oxen, burnish the lamps of the sanctuary, and make the fires? Nothing would go on properly. It was lucky I did not come along sooner: the rascals might have served me as they have this fellow. Lord save us! It was a narrow escape!"

So, without deigning to look a second time at the wounded man, pretending not to see him or

hear him or know that he was there, he passed by on the other side of the way. The wounded man gave a deep groan, and turned on his side as if to die.

Scarcely was the priest out of sight — the sound of his horse's hoofs had not died away on the air — when a Levite approached. He too was coming from Jericho, and, like the priest, was on his way to Jerusalem, being one of the body detailed for service in the temple on the following day. He was riding comfortably along, when the cry of a man in pain reached his ear. He reined in his horse, and listened; the cry came again. "Perhaps it is one of my brethren," he said, "who has met with an accident, or been attacked by sudden sickness; I must go and see." He crossed over, and threw a glance at the body.

"Poor fellow, that is a bad wound; the man has been stabbed; there are robbers; no help for him now; to stop and help him would be to waste time. I have ever so many things to do in Jerusalem. There are the temple-gates to be opened early in the morning; ever so many pots and pans to wash; loaves of bread to be baked, and gro-

ceries to be bought for the priests. Then I must see that the singers are ready, and in practice, that the trumpets and sackbuts and psalteries are in good tune, and that the marble floors are properly swept; after that comes the dirty work of slaughtering and skinning the poor beasts who are brought in to be sacrificed. I cannot do all this, and play doctor besides. I must either neglect my solemn duties in Jerusalem, or let this man die. If I stop, and do all that is necessary in a case like this, it will keep me here all night, and it will be a poor excuse to give to-morrow that I paused on the road to nurse a dying man. If it were only some great person whom I knew, it would be different; but this seems to be some poor fellow of no account,—a publican, I dare say, carrying home his money-bags; served him right for taking poor people's shillings to support this vile Roman government. Let us take a nearer look at him. Bless me, his wound is fresh; the robbers cannot be far off now; what if they should come back, and catch me? Hark; was not that the sound of horses' hoofs? They are coming this very moment."

Thereupon he gave his horse a blow, and made off, not daring to look behind him.

The sound of hoofs which startled the Levite proved to be the noise, not of robbers, but of another traveller, whose horse came stumbling over the rough stones of the road. He was going in the opposite direction to that which the priest and Levite were pursuing; and the cause that carried them there sent him away,—namely, the great festival. For he was a Samaritan. Of course he could have no part in the solemnities, and no interest in them. The priest would not have allowed him to offer a sacrifice in the temple, the Levite would have turned him out of the court-yard if he had seen him there. Very likely the people in the streets, under the excitement of religion, would have insulted him as worse than a Pagan.

In ordinary times the Jew hated the Samaritan so much that he would not eat, drink, or sleep with him; would not ride with him in the same company, or walk with him on the same side of the street, or have any business dealings with him, or indeed any dealings with him whatever. The

Samaritans were a different people from the Jews but they were instructed in the Jews' religion. They had been sent to Palestine by the king of Babylon, to make a colony in Palestine, before the Israelites were sent; and when the Israelites came, and began to build their new temple, the Samaritans begged to be allowed to help them. This the Jews, in their pride of race, refused, and the Samaritans, angry at the refusal, built a temple for themselves on Mount Gerizim, where they had their own worship.

Thus it happened that the two peoples, having very much the same religious belief, adoring the same God, venerating the same law, honoring the same teachers and prophets, reading the same holy books, rejoicing in the same national traditions, as well as sharing in a common humanity, never worshipped together, nor could either believe that God accepted the worship of the other. This old quarrel had lasted for ages, for religious quarrels always last longer and are much fiercer than any others; and now this Samaritan was going away from Jerusalem to avoid the feast which drew the Jews thither.

He was thinking rather sadly of all these things when he heard a faint cry for help proceeding from the road immediately before him. He hastened forward, and in a turn of the path came to the wounded man. At once he dismounted, and, thinking of nothing but his duty to a human creature, knelt down beside him to examine the number and character of his hurts.

At the first glance it was plain that the bleeding man was a Jew; that was evident from his features. It was an enemy of his race, a man who on meeting him in the street would have crossed over rather than touch his garment. No matter; he was a fellow-creature, he was unfortunate, he was dying from exhaustion.

“If I were in his place I should wish him to forget that I was a Samaritan; I will forget that he is a Jew.”

So saying, he stanchd the blood and dressed the wound as well as he could with ointment that he had with him, then he raised him tenderly and placed him on his own horse, he himself walking by the side, at once guiding the animal and supporting the man.

By good fortune, the inn I have described was not a great way from the part of the road where all this happened. To this inn the kind Samaritan brought his charge, and here he stayed with him all night, washed his wound, watched by his bedside, administered soothing draughts to make him sleep, and mixed balsams for his wounded side.

In the morning he was obliged to pursue his journey, but he left the sufferer in the care of the inn-keeper, with particular directions that he should have everything he wanted, and should be made as comfortable as the place and what it could furnish would allow. To make sure that all should be done as it should 'be, he took out his purse, put money in the landlord's hand, and said, "Make him as easy as you can; let him have every attention possible; do not spare expense. I shall be coming by again in a few days, and will repay to you then all he has cost you."

With this he mounted his horse and rode away.

When Jesus had ended his story, he turned to the lawyer and said, "Now for your question. You asked me what I meant by neighbor. I

ask you, which was the neighbor of the wounded man?"

The man hung his head, and muttered, "The person that helped him, I suppose."

"And who was the Samaritan's neighbor?"

"Why, of course, the person who needed his help."

"Very well; do the same thing yourself to those who need your help, and you will find the way to the Eternal Life."



DIVES AND LAZARUS.

THERE was once in Damascus a man who was very rich. He had extensive gardens stocked with the most delicious fruits, and fragrant with rare flowers; lovely arbors deep in the shade offered cool retreats in the days of midsummer, and fountains, fed by

water from the distant hills, played in the parterres, and sprinkled the shrubbery with their refreshing spray.

Everything that taste could desire or wealth could purchase was his; terraces and walks and long avenues of trees, and statues of marble gleaming among the bushes. His house was stately, with grand porches, and staircases of costly woods, and floors inlaid with cedar and ebony, and superb rooms carved and gilded by the artists from Tyre.

Every day he wore the finest linen, from foreign looms, and the richest cloth, stained with the gorgeous dyes of the Phœnicians; he went perfumed with the essences of Arabia, and gemmed with jewels of price from India and the sea. Every day he sat down to a feast to which every part of the earth contributed its daintiest products, and as he sat at his princely fare strains of music stole luxuriously through the apartment, and white-armed dancing-girls, with great black, lustrous eyes, and forms full of grace, kept the air in motion with fans of peacock-feathers, or glided round and round in the mazy

waltz. His wine was cooled with ice from the Northern mountains; the sherbet rose from porcelain salvers like snow-heaps on the Himalaya. Every night he slept on down, curtained in gossamer, and was lulled to rest by the witchery of music. No care had he but for himself; no thought for the poor and suffering in the great city where he lived. The sick applied to him in vain, his liveried servants turned them sorrowing from the door.

At the tall outer gate of this man, under the grand wall which brimmed over with the garden trees, on the hard stones of the street, sat, or rather lay, a beggar called Lazarus. Every morning he crawled thither from the miserable cellar where he lived, in the low part of the city; every evening he made his way back to the den which was not worthy to be called a home, for there was no wife or child there to greet him or comfort him. The passers-by saw him always on the same spot, in the same rags, and many a piece of money dropped into his lap from the hands of those who pitied his distress.

But the rich man gave him nothing. The great

carriage whirled in and out of the gate, but no friendly look was bestowed on the miserable pauper. The proud horses flung upon him the mud and dust of the road, but no blessing ever came from the rider. Only now and then the lower servants of the mansion, taking pity on the poor wretch, would fling him a crust of bread, or a piece of broken meat, which was meant for the dogs.

Poverty, suffering, scanty food, had in course of time caused disease; the beggar became a cripple, ulcerous sores broke out on his body, making him an object loathsome to look at; dogs came about him, and, as if in pity for his agony, licked his sores with their healing tongues. They were the best friends he had.

Thus it went on month after month, and all the neighborhood knew Lazarus the Beggar. He was never seen to smile, but he was never heard to curse; he had no harsh words for those who refused him alms; he called down no vengeance on those who spurned him with their feet; he breathed no complaint against Providence: on the contrary, they who passed by heard him mur-

muring prayers for patience, and thanks for the beautiful day.

At regular intervals he made his way painfully to the temple, crawled up the marble steps, crossed the broad pavement of the court as far as the treasury-box, and dropped in a mite for the support of the nation's worship, or to help those who might be as poor as he. Want and pain and sorrow had made him patient, resigned, and sympathetic. His outward needs were few; his inward needs were many; his bodily wants, by long deprivation, had become reduced to almost nothing; his spiritual wants, by the same deprivation, had become multiplied till their number was very large.

One day the beggar did not appear at his accustomed place by the rich man's gate. The next day he did not come. No one knew whither he had gone; there had been no funeral, there had been no sound of mourning in the streets, there was no gravestone in the cemetery. He was gone. The shadowy Angel of Death had come and taken the poor Lazarus away. The old body, — lean and bony and crooked, twisted

like a rope by long sitting on the sidewalk, bent by cramps, blackened by the blazing sun, and dry, cracked by disease, and speckled all over with leprous spots,—the miserable old body, with its rags and dirt and horny flesh, has dropped away like a cast-off snake-skin, or like the cocoon of the chrysalis, and the white soul, which had never been a beggar except to God for his mercy and peace, had put on garments of light, and sped off to another home.

No more pain for Lazarus; no more lameness, no more running and disgusting sores, no more cold looks and colder words from the passers-by, no more warnings from rude people to get out of the way, no more compassion from the dogs, no more contempt from human beings; the sky is broad and sweet above him. For the narrow street he has the green pastures and still waters of another clime; for solitude, the company of spirits like his own. The heart that was a little child is living with the little children, the innocent with the innocent, the simple and trusting with those who on earth trusted and were simple. Not with the great or mighty or wise, who walked

A light shone off him with the purest and devout and loving Dives was his joyful new. His form took shape according to the character he bore. His countenance was beaming with a sweet and holy brightness: his eyes shone with meek happiness: a quiet joy, as of a deep and humble content, pervaded his whole bearing. There was no mourning for him on the earth, but there was welcome for him in heaven. Men said, "It is good to have him go." Angels said, "It is good to have him come."

Not long after Lazarus was taken away, the same angel, whose gleaming face was hidden by his cloudy wings, stood at the rich man's gate. Sickness had been there before him,—Dives was dying. There he lay, helpless among his luxuries and splendors. With all his wealth he could not buy an easy breath, an hour of quiet sleep, the power to eat a mouthful of nourishing food, or to enjoy a swallow of pleasant drink.

The physician had spent his skill on him in vain, the potions, the elixirs, the essences, the cups of wine enriched with pearls and jewel-dust, had been given with no effect: relatives and friends

stood round the bed, or wandered through the superb halls reckoning up the portion of all this magnificence which should be theirs; slippered feet moved noiselessly over the softly carpeted floors, and hushed voices whispered together mysteriously.

The solemn hour came and passed. The whole city of Damascus knew that Dives was dead. There was a grand funeral; the body, embalmed and swathed in finest linen, was carried to a costly tomb cut from the solid rock, on a bier of sandalwood; a long procession of friends went with it to its burial-place, the street was filled by the crowd of hired mourners, howling and beating their breasts. Nothing surpassing it in expense had ever been seen in Damascus. It was as if a great man was being carried to heaven. Anybody would think so, certainly, who chanced to overhear the conversation of the relatives and friends of the deceased.

"Ah," they said, "a good man, a great man, a munificent man! how kind to his family! gave his wife and children all they wanted, put a thousand dollars a year into the Temple treasury. He

had the most splendid house in Damascus, the most extensive gardens, the most delicious fruits."

"What taste he had for art!" said one.

"Yes," said another, "and what dinners he gave, what suppers, what summer festivals! He has gone to the good place if anybody has."

So they gossiped along the way and at the street corners, for people thought then, as they think now, that a man who is splendid in the eyes of his fellow-mortals must be equally splendid in the eyes of God; that he who has the biggest house in this world will have the biggest house in the next; that he who lives daintily on earth will of course live daintily in paradise; and he who gives magnificent dinner-parties, with music and dancing-girls, will be invited to equally magnificent dinners hereafter, in mansions cooled by the airs of eternity and the plashing waters of life, where the seraphs should make the music and the houris should wait on table with their radiant grace.

So men think and thought. But, alas! there as now they were slightly mistaken. It was not precisely thus with Dives. When the angel of death

roused him from his sleep in this world to his waking in the other, the prospect was not cheerful. It was a dark and cloudy morning; the scene was unattractive; there were no golden ceilings, no marble floors, no silver-voiced fountains; he seemed to be in a narrow, cramped, dirty town, whose streets, with miserable little tenements on either side, looked as if they led nowhere, but kept forever winding in and out, and returning to the same place they started from. They were muddy with a mud that appeared as if it never could be dry, so deep and desperate was it; the atmosphere was chilly, bleak, and lifeless. There was just sunshine enough to make the heart sick because there was no more. The whole place was desolate to the last degree;—it was like a pauper village.

Dives looked about him with astonishment, but there being nothing in particular to see, he dropped his eyes, and took a survey of his own person. Could it be possible that this was he, Dives, the elegant, the sumptuous, the delicate in flesh, the soft in skin? This shrivelled, shrunken, shambling, shabby figure, with pinched face, and bony

fingers, and skin like a piece of old parchment? True enough; the change was very marvellous; the spirit was clothed now in its own form, and it was the form of one who had become mouldy by living long in a dungeon. Great livid spots of corruption were on him; his bones were chalky; his joints were big with bunches, like the fungus of an old tree; there was a weight as of a huge lump of lead on his heart, and an unutterable weariness oppressed him, till he was ready to sink into the earth with loneliness, while at the same time he had no wish to see the face of a human being; there was no love in him; there was no sympathy; there was no fellow-feeling; he clung to himself as a drowning man clings to a spar, and yet, while clinging to himself, he seemed to perish, for it was like clinging to a corpse.

Forms like his own were seen creeping along the streets, slinking in and out of the houses, dismally chuckling, and rubbing their hands, as if thinking of some pleasant things; then shaking their heads sadly, and moving on. Here and there one looked as if he was happy; but their smiles were more ghastly than others' wry faces

their laughter was more hideous to hear than shrieks would have been; their signs of satisfaction were horrible to witness; and Dives turned away from them with a shudder, hoping he might never be or look like them, for they who were sad looked like men and women, human like himself, while they that were merry looked like demons,—too devilish to know that they were devilish,—too bad to know that they were bad.

As one of these passed close by him, Dives instinctively made a motion, as if he would draw aside his garments to save them from pollution; but he had no garments; he was naked, save only a piece of old rag about his waist, such as an old beggar wore, whom he remembered now to have seen sitting at his gate, on the grand street of Damascus. Pah! how it smelt! what a fetid odor proceeded from its folds! He unwound it, and threw it from him; but the odor was still in his nostrils: it was the odor of his own person, the rank smell of his own soul. The rest, who were used to it, did not appear to be disagreeably affected by it; some evidently enjoyed it, and snuffed it up as if it was frankincense. They were the happy ones that did this.

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Dives probably had always carried the effluvia about with him, even when he had just bathed himself in water scented with the ottar of roses, only the ottar of roses, and the sandal-wood, and the precious gums, and the fragrance of flattery that was breathing about him all the time, made it impossible for him or for those about him to perceive it. Now and then a very holy man, whose sense of smell was very acute indeed, was observed to turn his head one side, and hold his nose, on meeting Dives on the sidewalk ; but holy men were not very common even then, and the two or three who made this movement of disgust were set down as silly people, who took that way of showing their spite to the rich man ; or as rude people, who did it to insult him ; or as exceedingly coarse people, whose olfactories, unaccustomed to delicate perfumes, could not bear the aromatic odor of so much sanctity. This was what Dives himself thought about it ; but now he saw his mistake.

As his eye accustomed itself gradually to the sight of the region he was in, Dives perceived far away what seemed a beautiful garden. He made his way towards it, and on approaching nearer

had his first impression confirmed. It was a spacious garden, with terraces, paths, fountains, arbors, lawns, flower-beds, — precisely like his own in Damascus, only far more stately and exquisite. The mighty palm-trees were waving there, and heavy clusters of grapes hung on the vines, and the scent of odorous flowers made the neighborhood rich. He went to the gate; it stood wide open; and within he could see bright forms moving to and fro, conversing, or meditating, or reposing beneath the shade.

A group of these forms chancing to come by the gate, Dives ventured to accost them, saying, "What place is this, and who are these that seem so peaceful and glad?"

One of the company answered, "This is the paradise of the simple and trusting and pure of heart, who in the world were patient and humble."

"And who is that one I see yonder sitting by the fountain, and talking eagerly to those about him? He seems to be a new-comer."

"That," replied the angel, "is Lazarus."

"What! Lazarus of Damascus, the same that sat begging so many years at my gate?"

"Yes, the very same. He is, as you guess, a new-comer, and is telling of his past life."

"I wonder if he would not remember me: let me go in and speak to him; I am sure he will know me, and give me a place in his dwelling."

"Nay," said the messenger, "it is impossible; you cannot come in. When you were inside the garden in Damascus, and he was outside, you would not let him come in to you; you charged your servants to spurn him from the door: now you cannot go in to him. But it is not he who keeps you out. The reason you cannot go where he is, is that that is not your place; you do not belong there: the same thing that hindered your going to him before hinders your going to him now,—namely, your hard, cold, selfish disposition; he was then the same that he is now, just as gentle and pure and peaceful; the only difference is in his clothes: if you found his company distasteful before, you will find it no less distasteful still. Try; you may come in if you can."

Dives strode forward to enter the gateway; but no sooner did his foot touch the threshold than he stopped; he could go no farther; invisible hands

seemed to push him back ; his feet were bound by unseen fetters ; he gasped for breath like one coming from a foul, stifled room into the clear air of a winter's day ; the atmosphere was too fine for his lungs ; his head turned round from giddiness ; the sweet light pained his eyes, so that he was forced to shut the lids ; every sense was overpowered, and he would have sunk to the earth if he had not at once stepped back outside the enclosure.

"You see," said the divine one, "it is as I told you ; there is a great gulf between you and Lazarus, which you cannot cross over till you become as he is."

"Alas !" cried Dives in his agony, "speak to him for me then ; if I cannot go to him, tell him I am here, and pray him to come to me ; tell him his old neighbor desires to see him ; he will come, I am sure, if he is as good as you say : he can come, can he not ? he can cross the gulf ?"

"No," returned the speaker ; "the same abyss that keeps you from him keeps him from you ; he cannot pass over it any more than you can. He would be as much out of place here where

you are, as he would have been in your grand house in the rich city. He might be sorry for you, as I am, as we all are ; but he cannot help you. You must help yourself by repentance and tears."

He was turning away with these words, when Dives implored once more, not in his own behalf, but in behalf of his brothers, who were still alive on the earth : "For pity's sake," he cried, "let them be warned in time ; let them know where I am, and what I suffer ; let Lazarus go to them and tell them of his fate and mine, that they at least may be saved."

The angel shook his head sadly as he responded, "Nay, neither may this be done. Your brothers would not believe what Lazarus told them ; they would not believe it was Lazarus that spoke ; they would scout the message as an imposture, and would call the messenger ghost. The story would sound to them absurd and ridiculous of their great relative in misery, and the beggar at his door in bliss. No, no, it would be of no avail. If they will not believe the written words of venerable Scriptures, they will not believe the

spoken words of one they do not know; if they will not be persuaded by the voices of kings and prophets, they will not be persuaded by the voice of a pauper; if they can listen unmoved to the pleadings of their humanity, they will listen unmoved to the pleadings of an apparition. There is the same on that side the grave to teach them how to live that there is on this side, more evident, more plain, more convincing too,—examples of good and evil men. If the living can teach them nothing, I am sure the dead cannot teach them; they must take their chance. Lazarus had no better. May they have the good sense to use their chance as well as he used his, better than you used yours.”

Having spoken these words, he withdrew with his friends, and the sound of their silvery voices on the air was like the ringing of sweet bells calling Dives to repentance.



THE TEN VIRGINS.

THERE was a wedding in the village of Bethlehem. A wedding is a very interesting and important event everywhere, and has been so since men and women were men and women. But nowhere were weddings more solemn than in Judæa, where Jesus lived. There

were a great many things to be done before two young people could be properly — by which I mean respectably — married. The lady's father and mother must be consulted about the match. The elders met and talked it over. There was money to be paid : sometimes by the young man to his bride's father, and sometimes by the bride's father to the young man. There were papers to be signed, pledges and promises to be made. All this was a matter of business, which the lady knew nothing about. When the young people were engaged, and before they were married, they did not see each other every day, as is the custom with us. They did not walk together by moonlight, nor drive together in the country, nor sit alone together in the parlor ; they remained apart from each other even more than they did before ; in fact, they did not see one another at all till the wedding-day. Nor did they meet then in the same way that we do. It is the fashion with us, you know, for the bridegroom, at the time fixed for the wedding, to go with his friends to the house of the bride's father, the members of both families come in, the ceremony is performed by

the clergyman, and after the ceremony there is a grand supper, with wine and flowers and merry-making. And then the bride goes with her husband to his own house.

Among the Jews, the bridegroom, with a company of young men of his own age, his intimate friends, went in happy procession, with torches and garlands and songs, to the dwelling of his bride. On the way he was met by a band of girls, the companions of her he was to make his wife, approaching from the opposite direction. The two processions join, the girls turn back, and the whole gay troop proceed to the house of the betrothed, receive her with glad shouts, take her into their ranks, and bear her off to the house of the young man. There the guests are assembled, the tables are spread with dainties, musicians play their sweetest music, and the festivities last long into the night.

On the occasion we speak of in Bethlehem, the two houses were somewhat far apart, the preparations were rather grander than usual, and the young men, belated, did not begin their merry march as soon as they had intended. It ^{was} ~~the~~

towards midnight when they started from the bridegroom's house. The young girls who were to meet them on the way, ten in number, took their position early in the evening with their torches burning brightly, and looked eagerly in the direction whence the bridegroom was to come. They were before their hour. To half of these giddy girls it never occurred that there would be any delay, or the least necessity for waiting. They made no preparation for tardiness, or hinderance, or stoppage. They knew about how long their torches would burn, and they supposed that would be long enough, and more than long enough. The other five were more prudent; they remembered the length of the way and the chances of detention; they said within themselves, weddings never are punctual, and there are always so many things to be done at the last moment; nobody thinks of time when all are so busy. This, too, is to be a grand wedding, with large preparations and a great many people; of course there will be delays; the supper will not be ready, the guests will not all arrive in season; there will be no harm in taking a little more oil,

so that, if our torches burn low, we may fill them again. It may not be wanted, but then, again, it may be. It is safer to have too much than too little. So they took their oil-cans with them when they left home.

Behold the ten girls grouped together at the entrance to the bride's house, beneath the porch, laughing and talking, as young girls will at such times. An hour passed away: two hours. What can be the matter? said one to another. Are they never coming? I was never kept waiting so long before; a mischance must have happened. Presently they began to grow drowsy; they could not keep their eyes open; they placed their torches against the wall of the house and sat down. Soon, one by one they fell off to sleep. They had been asleep but a little while when a loud noise started them all from their slumber. The night was merry with laughter, and bright with the flashing of torches. The young men were shouting, "Up, up! the bridegroom is coming, the bridegroom is coming, advance and meet him!"

There was great commotion among the girls.

They stretched themselves, rubbed their eyes, got to their feet as well as they could, grasped their torches. Alas! they were almost out; the wicks were crusted and foul, the flame was just on the point of leaving them. There was not a moment to lose; they who had brought oil with them in their cans quickly poured it into the shallow bowls of the lamps, snuffed the wicks hastily, and were ready to move on. The rest were at their wits' end; what was to be done? They could not go without torches, their torches were burned out, they had no oil to fill them. Full of distress, they seized hold of their companions, crying, "Give us some of yours." But they said, "We cannot do it; we have no more than enough for ourselves; if we should divide what we have, all our torches would go out. You must run round to the shop and buy some, quick. The silly girls ran off to the nearest shop; it was not very near, and when they reached it of course it was closed, and the man who kept it was sound asleep. They called, they knocked at the door, they made noise enough to alarm the street. The oil merchant slept well and was hard to

wake. When he awoke, it took some time to open the door, and more time to measure out the small quantities of oil from the jar.

Furnished at length, the girls set off at a quick pace, running till they were fairly out of breath. They heard the music in advance of them, they saw the glimmer of the torches against the sky, a few minutes more and they should catch the procession. Heated, panting, they endeavored to increase their speed; but, instead of going faster, they went slower, for they were already spent. Just as they came in sight of the house, they saw the door open, the glare of the illumination inside streamed out into the night, the procession crowded in noisy, there was a moment's bustle, — and the door was shut.

The poor belated girls slackened their pace, but still pushed on to the house, and knocked at the door. No answer; there was so much noise inside, such loud talking and laughing, such clatter of dishes, such din of musical instruments, that they were not heard. At length the bridegroom heard their cry, "Open the door," and called to know who they were.

"It is we," they said, "friends of the bride."

"How do I know that?" he answered. "You were not in her company, you did not come with the rest; all are here who belong here. I cannot admit you."

In vain they told their story, in vain they implored; he would not let them in, and after standing outside till the night chill struck into their bones, they went away, tired, sad, ashamed. They had missed the wedding feast, the joy, the praise, and all because they forgot to put a little oil into their vessels. They had been looking forward for weeks to this brave marriage party, they had bought new garments for it, they had guarded their fair looks, they had boasted among their companions of the honor done them by the bride when she chose them as her maids, and now by a trifling carelessness they had lost it all, and stood angry at their disappointment and mortified at their rejection. They were not ready, and so they were shut out. They failed in one thing, the thing at that moment needed, and the failure was complete. They had everything else, but they did not have oil; they had beauty, grace,

wit, sprightliness, but they did not have oil. They were prepared for all that could happen except the very one thing that did happen, and the door was shut on them.

It was a sad story, and Jesus told it sadly. Do you ask me why he told it? I will tell you. He knew that something was about to happen which his friends did not expect, and which would take them by surprise just as the bridegroom's coming surprised the silly girls. He had told them often what it was, but it was very far off, and they would not believe him; they did not get ready for it. They were strong enough for what befell from day to day, and they never imagined that anything could befall for which they were not strong enough. They had no idea of being caught suddenly, in a moment, unprepared. O yes, they thought they had oil enough in their lamps.

But one day it came like a flash of lightning out of the sky, — this thing which, if they had paid attention to what their Master said, they would have been sure might come, and would come sooner or later. Their Master was seized by soldiers, and carried away like a criminal to be tried

for his life. They, like the virgins, were asleep in the garden of Gethsemane. A great noise roused them; they started from the ground; the night was aglow with the blaze of torches in the hands of guards; the stillness was broken by the clash of swords and spears. Their Master, whom they had been looking for in pride and pomp, stood before them a prisoner. What did they do then? Were they ready to go with him? Were their lamps full of the holy oil of faith and courage? Alas, no! They flickered a moment, and went out. The history says, they all forsook him and fled. Was not that sad? After having left their business and their homes to follow him, after having borne so much ridicule and so many frowns, after giving so many months, and taking so many weary journeys, and forsaking brothers and sisters, and hoping through so many discouragements, was it not sad to fail just at this last moment of trial? Having so much power, was it not a pity they had not just that little more?

But so it was. Peter, who boasted so proudly that he was willing to die with his Master, was the only one of the company that followed him;

and Peter followed at a distance so that he might not be known for a disciple. Peter went only as far as the outer porch of the building where Jesus was taken by the soldiers, and when he was known there as being one of his disciples, he denied it flatly, and said with an oath that he had nothing to do with the prisoner. The Bridegroom came with his hands tied, and a crown of thorns upon his head, came at midnight, and the servant's lamp had gone out.

My dear children, you have too little oil if you have not enough to last all night. You are weak, if your strength is not sufficient for the hardest work that may be given you to do.

When I was travelling in Europe, some years ago, I came one day to what seemed the bed of a small river; but there was no river there, only a thin, shallow rivulet, that crept slowly along, scarcely moving the pebbles on the bottom, and running round the larger stones, because it had not body enough to pass over them, or force enough to push them aside. In some places it was so small that I felt as if it must come to a stop from sheer weakness, being too tired to go

any further. It looked in the distance like a fine silver cord laid down in a ravine. A child might have crossed the brook at its deepest part without wetting its knees ; but, will you believe it ? I actually crossed it by a huge stone bridge that looked as if it had been built by giants. It stretched from shore to shore of a wide channel, and at either side was strengthened by immense buttresses, clamped with iron bars. In the middle of the river-bed rose two vast columns of masonry supporting arches of great height and magnificent proportions, three in number. These columns, that seemed mighty enough to be pillars of the sky, were protected on the side that faced up the stream by bulwarks of tremendous size, solid granite piers, sharp at the end like wedges. To erect such a structure must have cost months of toil, and thousands on thousands of dollars. And why was it erected there ? Why in that, of all places in the world, where a single plank laid across would answer all purposes of passing from one bank to another ? Marvelling greatly at such a waste of material and labor, I went my way. It was summer. Some months later I passed the same way again. It was in the season of the

heavy rains. The torrents from the mountains came tumbling, pouring, boiling down, headlong, furious, carrying everything before them. Great trees were torn up by the roots, and hurled onward as if they had been chips or straws; enormous pieces of rock, loosed from the mountainsides or wrenched from the sand, came down with the flood, crashing and shattering all before them. The channel that had been so dry before was now full to the very edge with the foaming tide; the rivulet was a torrent that raved round the bulwarks of the bridge, and rose nearly to the height of the gigantic columns, till the tall arches looked scarcely high enough to let the turbulent waters pass through. It was all the bulwarks of adamant could do to turn aside the rocks that were hurled against them, and to break the force of the forest-trees. Had the bridge been less huge than it was, it must have been carried away. Had it been less strongly built, it must have been dashed in pieces. It was made for just such a time as that was. The freshet came down never more than twice in a year, generally no more than once. The structure was erected to withstand that single freshet. Useless all the rest of

the year, it was absolutely necessary then. If it was not there at that moment, it might as well have not been there at all, for that was the moment of need, that was the moment of danger, that was the moment when no one could have passed the stream without it.

But huge bridges, such as this was, are not constructed in a few days; the people could not wait till they saw the floods rising before they began to lay their stones; the work must be begun, continued, and finished in the summer season, when the bed of the stream is dry; and there it must stand all the year round, whether needed or not, in drought and in deluge, a stupendous monument of human industry and patience and foresight, in order that it might be there the very instant it *was* needed. It must be a thousand times too strong eleven months in the year, in order to be just strong enough the twelfth month. But the services rendered that twelfth month amply paid for all it cost in toil and treasure.

My children, do you understand the story of the Virgins, and of the Bridge? Think about it, and you will.



THE TALENTS.

CONCE upon a time there was a rich and noble prince, who was obliged to leave his dominions and travel for a time in a far country. Not knowing how soon he might return, he called three of his officers and intrusted to them certain gifts, — talents we will call them,

though they were not talents, for talents were sums of money.

To one he gave Genius, — the genius which creates works of beauty, the genius of the artist. It was necessary that his halls and chambers, his churches, porticos, and palace saloons, should be decorated with pieces of exquisite art, — portraits of his ancestors, views of natural scenery, historical events, famous for heroism and nobleness; therefore to this one of his servants he gave Genius.

To another he gave the power to create wealth. He had great need of money for all magnificent works which he designed for his palaces and galleries, his museums, churches, libraries, his public buildings of all kinds.

To the third servant he gave a good heart, — the power of loving and gaining love: only that; no genius, no wealth, no beauty, only a kind disposition.

Then he went away, leaving the servants to use their talents each in his own fashion, but giving them to understand that they must use them.

The first servant was full of joy at the noble

gift he had received at his prince's hands, and all his friends congratulated him on his golden talent. Without delay, and with the utmost eagerness he set to work to increase it. Day and night he studied and labored: he went out into the woods to study the trees, he went among the mountains, he lingered by the sea-shore, he was up early to watch the sunrise, and every evening as the sun went down his eye was open to see all the glory, his heart was open to feel all the peace of it. He watched Nature in all her moods and aspects with an earnest love in his look that made Nature all his own. Then he read books, the books of the great lovers of beauty. He travelled in great cities, and saw all the pictures of world-famous artists, all the time kindling the sentiment of beauty in his soul, and filling his imagination with shapes of loveliness, so that every beautiful thing he saw left its image on his heart. He saw more beauty in the world in the course of a rainy day than most people saw in the course of a bright month; he saw more beauty in ugly things than most people saw in handsome ones; faces from which others turned away in disgust had for him

a charm in line or feature or expression which he could hardly describe.

Having thus educated his eye and his feelings, he educated his fingers, in order that he might use the brush skilfully, and lay colors well on the canvas. Soon his fame as an artist began to spread; first in the city where he lived, then in neighboring cities, finally in foreign countries where he had never been seen. His painting-room was visited by strangers who came to the city, his pictures were bought at a great price, and those who had never seen any of his work were so much delighted by all they heard of him that they begged him to paint for them anything he chose, and they would pay him whatever he asked. Rich gentlemen, ladies fair and high-born, great nobles and princes of the realm, came to his door in their gilded carriages to sit to him for their portraits, and kings of other lands asked him to come and take up his abode with them, and let them have the honor of maintaining his genius and reflecting his glory. To have one of his landscapes in a parlor was a privilege the best might envy; to have one of his portraits in a hall

gave distinction to a house. The walls of kingly mansions were covered with his glowing canvas, great scenes of victory, and martyrdom, and saintliness; and people as they entered churches stopped in the alcove or by the window, where hung the picture of prophet, apostle, or angel from his hand,—stopped and looked at it with joy on their faces and light in their eyes, just as if the real prophet, apostle, or angel stood there to bless them. It was very wonderful the power this man had. No matter what he painted, it was beautiful in all eyes from that moment.

One day as he was crossing the public square he saw what everybody sees every day of his life, but few ever bestow a thought on,—a mother with her little boy in her arms. She was a poor country-woman, in the cheap dress of her class, of common stuff but very bright colors. She wore nothing on her head, her feet were bare, but the face was sweet and full of mother's love for her babe. She was standing idly on the sidewalk, enjoying the light of the afternoon sun. Picking up a piece of wood that lay at his feet, the artist, with a few touches, sketched the little group,

and passed on. Not long after, a picture of this mother and child hung up in his studio. People looked at it with astonishment. They never knew how much there was in this common mother's love; they had no idea the face of a woman could be so beautiful; they had never imagined that ordinary human affection could be glorified so. It was the face of an angel, and yet it was only the face of a woman. It was a revelation to all that saw it; as they looked at it, they could only think of the Divine love as the love of a tender mother for her infant child. The painting was hung up in a great church, and the people, when they came in and saw it, felt like falling down on their knees before it and worshipping. It brought the heavenly pity so near, that crowds would go and stand by it till their hearts were too full of feeling to hold, and ran over their eyelids in tears. Sad people were comforted by gazing on the celestial face, and even sinful people were so touched that their hearts were broken, and all the sin came out. Any day you might see women with their children in their arms looking up at the dear eyes, and poor girls weeping before them penitent

and forgiven. The picture was copied a great many times, and placed in a great many churches, and always it was like a real angel in the building.

So this servant improved his talent.

The second servant, too, improved his. His lord had given him the power to create wealth, and he went to work with all his might to create it. He made journeys by land and by sea; he bought and sold; his wealth increased fast and faster, from month to month, till he became a very rich man. His ships were on all waters and in all ports; his warehouses were full of silks and velvets and costly bales of goods from every quarter of the globe; he owned farms and vineyards, houses in the country and houses in the town; the richest portion of rich cities belonged to him: he was a merchant-prince.

Having all this money, it seemed as if he could do anything he pleased. He became a famous and powerful man in the state; his friendship was sought far and near. How he was envied! How he was fawned on and flattered! How he was courted by all sorts of men who wanted money for their purposes! by merchants, who wanted

money for their business; by scholars, who wanted it for their books; by good men, who wanted it for charity; by bad men, who wanted it for pleasure; by politicians, who wanted it to buy the people; by statesmen, who wanted it to pay the government debts; even by kings, who wanted it to hire soldiers to fight their battles, to purchase guns, and swords, and spears. All came to the great rich man; good men were forgotten, saintly men were neglected, wise men were passed by; the rich man was the great man. Even the painter stood second to him, for could he not buy all the painter's pictures? So the gilded carriages rolled up to his door, and nobles had to wait in his hall till he chose to see them.

But he remembered who it was that gave him this wonderful talent. He knew that it was not his, but his lord's, who would come home and demand an account of it, and the use he made of it; and instead of wasting it in useless enjoyments, in rich garments, and delicious food, and costly furniture, he kept it for his master's use. When he knew what his lord would be glad to have him do with it, he took pains to do that

thing. For instance, he was very sure that his lord would like to do something for the poor, the sick, the miserable; so he caused houses to be built for those who had no homes, asylums for the weak, the decrepit, the aged, hospitals for the care of the sick and wounded; he interested himself in the education of the humbler classes of people, and hired good men to go about among the wicked, to visit the jails, to preach to the ignorant. A great deal of the money he made was spent in this way, because he was quite certain that he should please his dear lord by doing so. What he did not spend in some such way as this, he kept till his lord should come home and tell him what to do with it.

So this good servant used his talent.

The third servant was not so faithful as the other two. He said to himself, "This is a small talent which my lord has given me; I cannot do much with it. If I had, now, the artist's genius, or the rich man's money, that would be worth while; then I could do something. I could get power and influence, I could make myself a name, I could do some credit to my lord; but who can

do anything with this little feeling of kindness that he has planted in my heart? It may be good, and sweet, and pleasant, in its way; it makes my home cheerful, it makes my wife and children love me, it makes my friends attached to me; but what of that? It will never make me rich, or great, or famous; it will never paint pictures, nor build grand houses, nor erect colleges and hospitals. On the whole, I think I may as well let it alone, and try to do something with some other talent."

So he did his best to make money, to get office, to acquire reputation, as other men did who had great gifts, which he had not. It was all in vain, of course; he lost his time, his strength, his spirits; constant failure, discouragement, and defeat soured his temper and embittered his heart. He succeeded in nothing that he undertook, and because he did not succeed, he became cross and crabbed; he envied those who had more riches than he had; he was angry with those who gained the high places; he spoke ill of those who were sought by the great and proud. After a time his friends seemed less dear to him, he

took less pleasure in his children, he even felt less love to his wife; he was peevish and sullen; his home was sad.

So it went on for several years, at the end of which the lord returned. One of the first things he did on his return was to call to him his three servants, and ask them how they had used the talents he had given them. Then came the first, the artist, with the light of genius in his eyes, and the words of eloquence on his lips. He took his master to his studio where his last great picture hung; he carried him through the long galleries rich with the work of his hands; he visited with him the churches whose splendid altar-pieces were the wonder of the time; he set before him the landscapes, the portraits, the scenes of victory and heroism, which men and women admired.

"Well done, well done!" said the prince, "you have used your talent faithfully; you have executed great works, you have enriched my dominions and conferred an everlasting benefit on all my people; you have been cultivating yourself, making your own being rich, and at the same time you have been adding to the happiness, the

nobleness, the goodness of all mankind; you have been a teacher of heroism and holiness to all that know you, and they are legion. Sit here at my right hand: be my honored and dear friend."

Then turning to the second, he said, "And what have you done?"

The second showed him what he had done: he brought out the great books of accounts, which told how fast his wealth had increased, gave him the number of his ships, his warehouses, his estates, opened chests of jewels and gems, opened bales of costly stuffs, and ended by conducting him all over his hospitals and asylums.

The lord was greatly delighted when he saw all this, and praised his servant greatly for his industry. He had done well; he had multiplied his talent many, many times: he, too, should have a high place in his friendship.

Then came the third servant, slouching along, with his eyes fixed on the ground, as if he was ashamed to look his lord in the face. He would not have come, had he dared to stay away, and now he came, he came like a criminal. "Well," said the master, "and what have you done? What can you show?"

“Nothing.”

“Nothing? Nothing? Where is the talent I gave you?”

“It is buried in the ground.”

“Why did you bury it in the ground?”

“Because I could turn it to no account; it was too small to make anything of. It would not give me wealth, nor honor, nor reputation. Besides, I knew that whatever I did with it would bring me nothing; all the profit would belong to you. Suppose I did work, and drudge, and slave, you would claim it all; you, who had been spending your time pleasantly in strange lands, would just put out your hand and seize what did not belong to you. Why should I toil for you?”

The lord, hearing such words as these, was very angry. “Toil for me!” he cried. “Do you not toil for yourself as much as for me? Did the artist receive nothing for improving his talent? Did the merchant receive nothing for improving his? Have I made them poor? Have I robbed the artist of his feeling of beauty, his imagination, his joy in all lovely things? Have I taken from the merchant his liberal and noble mind?”

“Your talent was small, was it? You may think so, because you think nothing large that does not make a great show; but it was really no smaller than the rest had. If you had used it, even if you had not done all you might with it, if you had used it at all, it would have given you a perfectly happy heart, though it would not have made you rich or famous. I did not mean it should; but it would have given you something a great deal better than wealth or fame: it would have given you contentment and peace; by improving it a little more, it would have given you a very dear and beautiful home, full of love and goodness, where there should be no unkind words or deeds, no disobedience, no coldness, no selfishness, — where all, from the oldest to the youngest, should help one another, comfort and cheer and bless one another, — where the children should grow up to revere their parents, and the parents should treat their children as friends, — where love should make it easy to bear poverty and do hard work, and duty should be delightful, and care a joy.

“By improving your gift a little further, you might have made a great many people your

friends. You might have carried your love outside your own home to the homes of others; you might have made sad homes happy, and dark homes bright, by your look, your voice, your gentleness; you might have gone into these hospitals which my servant has built, and comforted the poor patients there on their sick-beds, and made the dim eyes and the sorrowful faces light up at your coming with a sudden pleasure, and caused wretched sufferers to look for you as for the light of day, and bless you from the bottom of their hearts. Would not that be something worth laboring for? Is it a small talent that can be used to such effect as that? Is it a poor gift that brings all this reward?

“If you had chosen to cultivate it still more, it would have brought in a still richer reward. You might have made your heart so large with loving that it would take in the outcast, the stranger, even the wicked. You might have turned enemies into friends; you might have the bad love goodness by seeing you so good; you might have softened hard hearts by your gentleness, so that the goodness which was hidden away in the dark-

est corners of them should come out beautiful and fruitful; you might have done a great deal by your quiet example to make men love each other better, and care for each other more tenderly; you might have healed quarrels, put away jealousies, appeased angers. Added to that power in society, which is always trying hard to push off the heavy wrongs that curse mankind, you might have done your part to free the slave, to convert the slaveholder, to reclaim the criminal. It was a noble talent that I lent you. I have no nobler than this. No matter if it does not make you great or fine, it gives you a place in the kingdom of heaven: better than that, it creates the kingdom of heaven in you.

“But you have not done any of these things; you have not helped add to the peace, and joy, and happiness of your fellow-beings; you have not blessed the poor, or aided the weak; you have not taken the trouble to make your own home happy; nay, you have not even cared to gladden your own heart. Very well; the loss is yours. Give me the talent back, then, just as I gave it to you.”

The man began fumbling round in his old rubbish-room of a heart, trying to find the little seed of love which was planted there, and at last he drew forth a poor, dried-up, wizzled, black thing that had once been a Love, — that was all there was. The talent had not been used, and so it had perished.

And the lord said: "Behold, he that uses his gift has all gifts; he that abuses his gift has none. The faithful artist and merchant have, besides their talent and the honor it brings them, this other talent of the good heart. You, beside losing the good heart, have lost the honor too. Their faithfulness has added to wealth and fame the love and blessing of their fellows. Your unfaithfulness has deprived you of wealth and fame, as well as of Love."



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

THE temple at Jerusalem must have been one of the most splendid-looking buildings in the world, though a great many were larger and more imposing in their display of architecture. It stood on the top of a high rock, which had been cut level at the summit to receive

it, and the buildings rose on terraces one above another, so that they presented at a distance the appearance of a lofty pile. The highest building of all could be seen from all parts of the city, and looked like a snow-covered mountain, so white was the marble it was made of, and its front was so covered over with plates of gold that it was like a second sun in the heavens. The whole was surrounded by a strong wall, pierced with several gateways. The "beautiful" gate of Solomon's porch was on the east side. Entering by this gate, one passed through a double row of marble porticos, with cedar roofs, supported by tall columns, and within these porticos was a vast court, called the Court of the Gentiles, where people of all nations might meet. At the sides were rooms for the servants of the temple, eating-rooms and sleeping-rooms, booths and shops, stalls for oxen, sheep, and other animals, which were on sale there for offerings to Jehovah; tables where men sat selling doves, selling salt, meal, wine, or changing money for those that came to buy. The mosaic floor of this place was covered sometimes with scraps of paper, bits of rag and rope, and all sorts

of litter, such as one sees in a market-house. But usually it was clean, and, though many people might be there, except on great festival occasions, the place was still.

Fourteen steps led from this Court of the Gentiles to another court, not so large, but still very spacious, which none but Jews were allowed to enter. And out of this, again, one went up fifteen steps to a third court, still passing into it by a very splendid gate. This court was very broad and magnificent. It was enclosed on all four sides by grand colonnades, and at the eastern end stood the handsome altar for the burnt-offerings, that is, for the sacrifice of animals which were killed, and burned by fire.

It was probably in the outer court of the temple that the scene occurred which Jesus describes in the following story.

Into the great square of God came two men to pray. One of them belonged to that class of people who were called Pharisees,—a name which means “separated,” set apart from the rest of the world. They who bore it regarded themselves as superior to all other mankind, fancied

that they were made of finer clay, that God thought a great deal more of them than he did of most folks, took better care of them, gave them higher thoughts and purer feelings, and kept the best seats for them in heaven. They were very lofty in their look and behavior, and moved about in the great cities as if everything belonged to them. They had the fine houses, they went to the handsomest synagogues, they brought the most costly and regular offerings to the grand altar of the temple, paid for the wax candles, contributed more than any other class of people to the support of the worship, because they thought that in doing so they gained God's favor. They used to boast how much they put into the treasury, and almost any day you might see one, perhaps more than one of them, come in at the hour when the crowd was greatest, and pompously drop his piece of gold into the box, for the poor.

The particular Pharisee with whom our present story is concerned was a tall man, of handsome and stately person. His grand beard lay massive on his breast, his face was smooth and full, his eye

clear, and with that look of confidence which marks the gentleman of good standing in society. He wore a long robe, full and flowing, of costly material and rich color, with a deep border all round the skirts of it, and edging of the same pattern on his ample sleeves. A heavy gold chain hung from his neck, his fingers were adorned with rings, his sandals were bound on with fine leather and decorated with glittering stones. On his forehead, tied on by strings which went round his head, was a wide band of silk, called a phylactery, on which was embroidered this verse of Scripture: "Stand aside; I am holier than thou."

The man came in by the grand gate, made his way superbly through the multitude of kneeling, prostrate people,—many of whom were obliged to move out of the way that he might pass,—proceeded to the most conspicuous place, and, standing upright in full view of all who chose to see, uttered this prayer in a loud voice:—

"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. I thank thee that, while other men drive hard bargains, cheat, lie, steal, defile themselves,

I am honest and clean, always telling the truth and paying my debts. I thank thee, that, while other men get a livelihood by collecting taxes for the Roman government, I hate the Romans with a good Hebrew hatred, and should be glad to see them all destroyed. I thank thee that I am a pious member of the old-fashioned Jewish Church, that I never went to the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, nor gave any countenance to that crazy son of a Galilean carpenter, nor had anything to do with his doctrines, except to spew them out of my mouth. I thank thee that I am saved from all error and unbelief, from all desire to know more about the Bible than my fathers knew, and from all wish to think otherwise of thee than they thought; that I abhor the Greek and the Samaritan even as thou dost, and do all in my power to secure the kingdom of Heaven to the chosen children of Israel. I thank thee that I believe in Moses and the Prophets, and in all the Law, that I am diligent in proving the sincerity of my belief by my good works, and that I am sure of happiness hereafter, while the Sadducees, and Essenes, and publicans, and all other sinners, will

be doomed to everlasting destruction. And now, O Lord, behold what I do for thee! Twice every week I eat no meat; I am constant at my morning and evening devotions; my sacrifices are many and costly; I make rich gifts to the temple; I have built a synagogue for the poor at my own expense; my phylactery is the broadest in Jerusalem; a tenth part of all my income is given in alms to the needy, and for the support of the public worship. I have done all I could to overthrow and punish those who lead the people astray by false teaching, telling them that the pure in heart shall see thy face, and that the poor in spirit shall inherit the kingdom,—those that preach deliverance to the captives and talk to the common people about the good time coming. Morning and night my prayers rise to thy throne, that such may perish from the face of the earth. So will they ever rise. Amen.”

His prayer ended, the Pharisee turned to leave the temple court. Again he was obliged to pass through the crowd. Here was a group of laborers to be avoided, there was a poor fisherman, whose clothes were dirty with the stains of his

boat. Passing by one of the treasury-boxes, a thin woman, wrinkled, bent, sorrowful, in the garment of mourning, jostled him in the effort to drop two little bits of copper into the chest. He darted a look of contempt at her, and, pushing on, met the glance of the Galilean Jesus, who stood close by, with two or three of his followers, talking evidently about him and that very woman. The Pharisee drew himself up to his full height, folded his robe about him, tossed his head in the air, and, with an expression of supreme disgust, hastened along, hot and angry, but trying to cover up his rage by putting on an air of superb indifference.

Now he has escaped the throng of people ; he is near the grand colonnade which goes round the enclosure ; he is about passing out into the street, when, in the shadow of one of the pillars, out of sight almost, but directly in his path, he saw what ? A publican, kneeling at his prayers. A moment more the borders of his garment would have brushed against the prostrate figure ; he only saved himself from the polluting touch by a rapid movement, by which the robe was snatched out of the way. Fortunate escape ! If he had

touched that wicked man, he would not have been clean again for a week. Blessing his stars for coming off so well, and thinking that the corner of the street was, on the whole, a better place to pray in than the temple, he left the building and went to his home.

And who was this man kneeling in the shadow of the pillar? He was, as I have said, a publican, that is, a man whose business was to collect taxes from the people for the support of the government. Now the men who come round to collect taxes are never very much liked, even when the money raised by the taxes is spent for public schools, hospitals, the paving of streets, the lighting of cities, or any other thing which is useful, good, and necessary. But the money raised by the taxes which these publicans collected was spent to maintain a government which the people detested; to pay soldiers by whom they were insulted and oppressed; to enrich rulers who took away their liberties, deprived them of their rights, and would be glad to destroy their religion. Of course, the men who collected this money were hated by everybody because they did it. They were looked

upon as traitors to their country, enemies of their church, foes to their God, — in a word, as little or no better than the heathen themselves. They were hissed and scorned on all hands. It was as much as a man's reputation was worth to walk with one of them in the street, accept their hospitality, or even sit down to the same table with one of them. It was one of the bitterest charges against Jesus, that he dined with publicans.

But the publicans were no worse than other men. They were probably as honest, as truthful, as just, as charitable, and as kind, as their neighbors. Their occupation was regarded as a disgraceful one, but they did not like it any better for that; they did not enjoy being pointed at and spit upon. Somebody must do the work, and perhaps they did it more gently and tenderly than it would have been done by other hands. It was better that Jews should collect the taxes from Jews, than that Romans should, for the Romans would do it harshly and cruelly, in a way that might breed quarrel and lead to bloodshed. The publicans did the business, because it was the only business they found to do, more was the pity, or

because it was the business they were best fitted to do. They had families to support, and children to feed, and they did it by collecting taxes, as other men did it by catching and selling fish, by breeding sheep for the market, by letting houses to the poor for high rents, or by moulding candles for the temple service. They did the work, very hard and disagreeable work too, and they took their profit for it, — profit which somebody else would have taken if they did not, and very likely less than somebody else would have taken. What I mean to say is, that these people were not to be despised for their business, were not to be called wicked because other people did not like their trade. Their trade did not hurt them, did not make them impious or hard-hearted. Their trade did not hurt their fellow-beings, as the trade of the dram-seller, for example, does. Those who carried it on might keep their honor and purity, their love to God and man as clean and whole as any class of persons in the world. Many of them did so ; there must have been good in these publicans, or Jesus would not have had so much to do with them. You must have

marked this, that he never pours out his wrath on them as he does on the Pharisees; that he never holds them up to public scorn; that he never says they cannot come into the kingdom of God. On the contrary, it is a standing accusation and reproach against Jesus, that he keeps company with the publicans, dines with them, stays at their houses, admits them into the number of his friends. The truth is, these people were drawn to Jesus; they heard eagerly what he had to say; they welcomed his new Truth; they loved him; they took pains to meet him and show him attention. One of them, who was sitting at his office door as Jesus passed by, rose instantly at his call and became his disciple. This was Matthew, the writer of the Gospel which bears his name. And here it is a publican whom Jesus sees at his prayers, and praises for his humility.

To return now to this man kneeling in the shadow of the great stone pillar, near the temple door. He had come in quietly and gone to this out-of-the-way spot, where nobody could see him, in order that he might be quite alone with his

thoughts, and he would have gone out as unnoticed as he came in, had not the eye of the Great Teacher, as it followed the tall Pharisee picking his way among the people, noticed the sudden twitching up of his robe, and seen the dark figure crouching low on the pavement. The man remained bowed and motionless as he was at first. He felt neither the proud glance of the Pharisee, nor the tender one of the Master; he was not conscious that the one despised him, nor that the other praised; he had no idea, as he knelt there, his forehead close to the stones, and his hand on his heart, that he was watched by the wonderful person who made all the world see what he saw, who took photographs of men and women, and hung them up in his divine picture-gallery, for the ages to look at; little did he dream that his portrait, taken on the spot, would be placed in that gallery to show east and west and south and north the image of the true worshipper. He was too much absorbed in his meditations to note what went on around him.

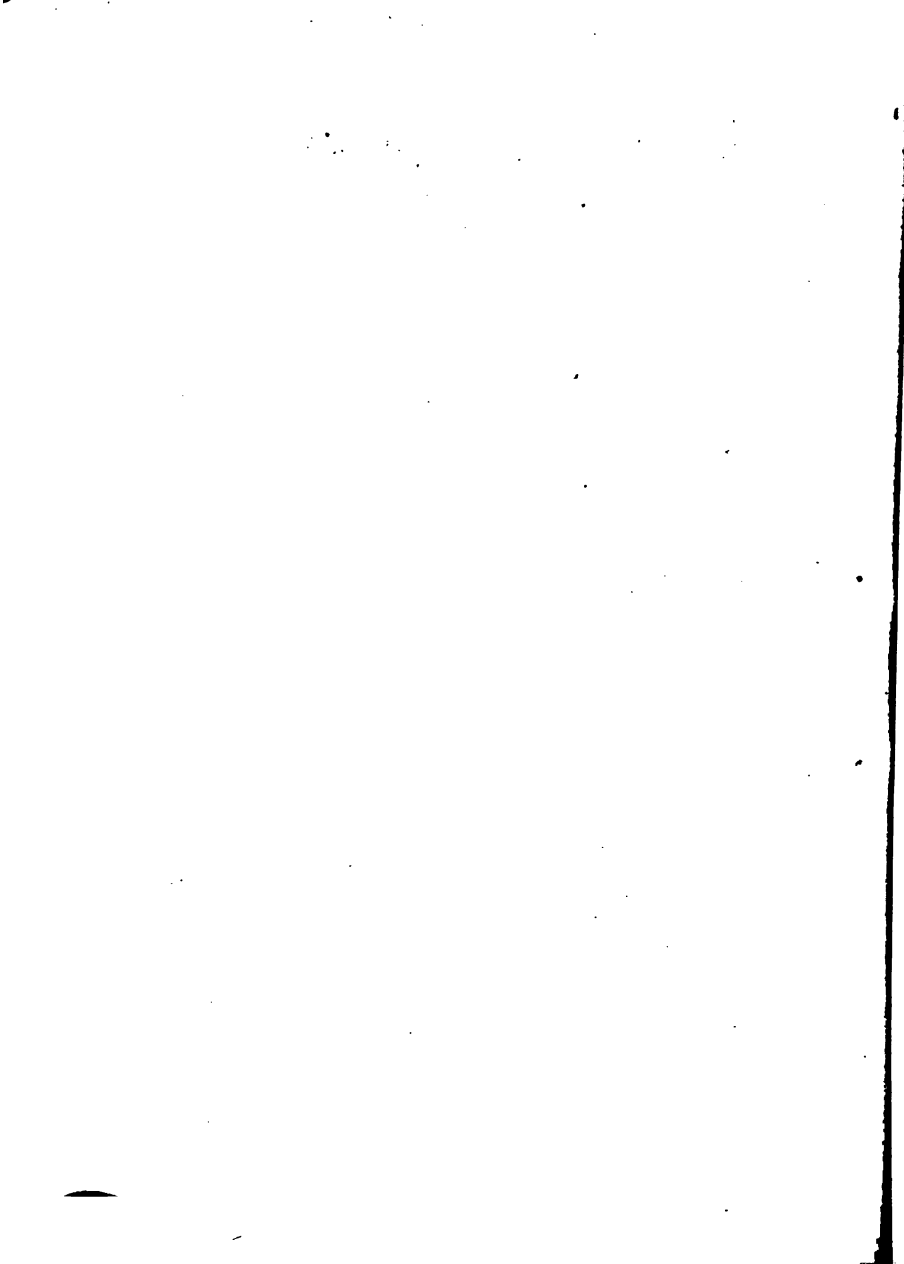
Silent he bent himself forward: not a loud word escaped his lips; his prayer was inward, and it was

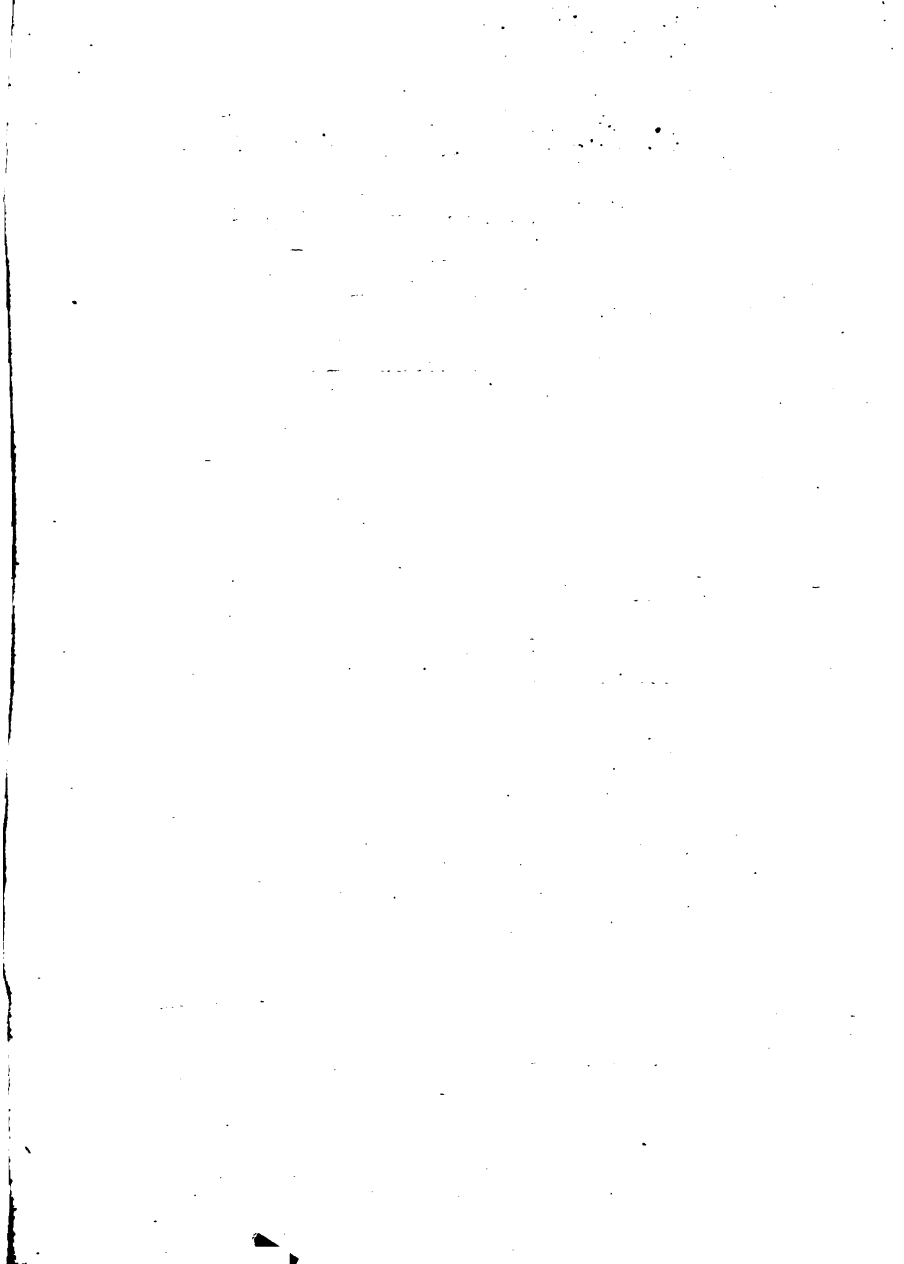
very short. He had nothing to boast of in the presence of his Maker; he did not come to that place with a long list of his good thoughts and deeds; he did not care to say how many times he fasted and prayed, how much he loved the church, and how much money he gave to the poor; he did not feel like complaining of his hard lot, of the scorn men heaped on him, the frowns, the hisses, the kicks he received; he cursed nobody in his devotions, nor did he ask God to withhold a single blessing from any one of his fellow-men; he claimed no reward here or hereafter for any service he had rendered to his fellow-creatures, nor did he imagine he would have a better place in heaven than the lowest of the Almighty Father's children. He remembered only what he had not done, what he had not been, what he had not deserved, how many good things he had never given thanks for, how many times he had told the untruth when he should have told the truth, how many times he had disbelieved when he should have believed, how many times he had closed his hand when he should have given, how many times he had been angry with

those who treated him ill, and had hated those who abused and spurned him. As he knelt in the shadow of the tall column, another shadow fell upon him, the shadow of his own unworthiness, the shadow of the great judgment. He could not stand up on his feet, he could not loftily erect his head, he could not lift up so much as his eyes to the heavens; he could only smite upon his breast, in sign of grief, and murmur, "God be merciful! God be pitiful!"

But that little murmur found its way out of his humbled heart, rose above the noise of the multitude, and the smoke of the incense, slid through the air out into the infinite, up to the Eternal, and came back to him, like the dove with the olive-branch, and rested softly in his heart.

THE END.





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